

CALIBER

MATURE AUDIENCES

5

1⁹⁵
USA

2⁵⁰
CAN

CALIBER

P R E S E N T S

- featuring -

Old World

by

Mark C. Perry

- also -

Maxie's

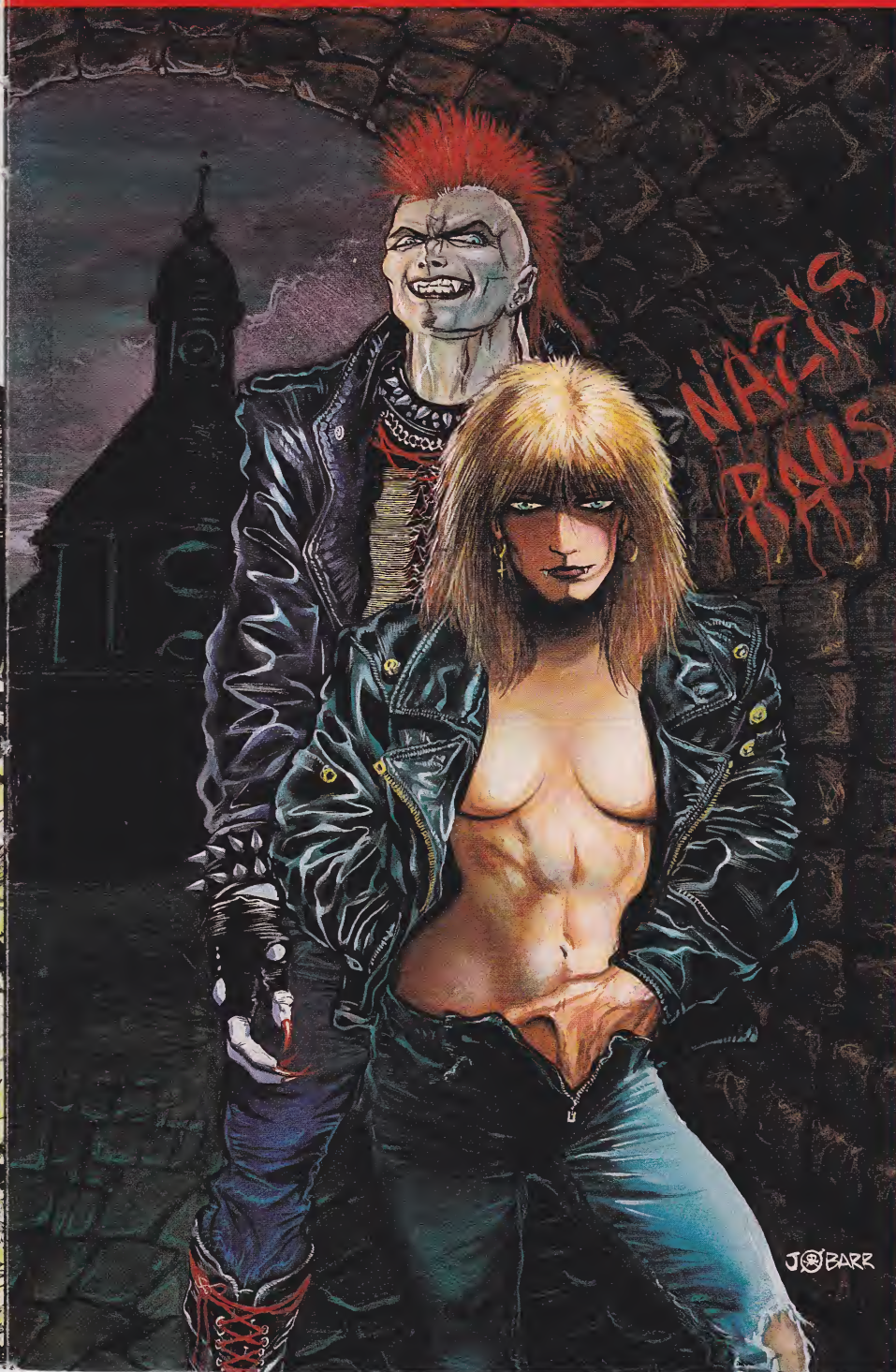
Street Shadows

Gideon's

Fragile Balance

and

Last Generation



48 PAGES!



CALIBER

P R E S E N T S

Vol. 1 No. 5

July 1989

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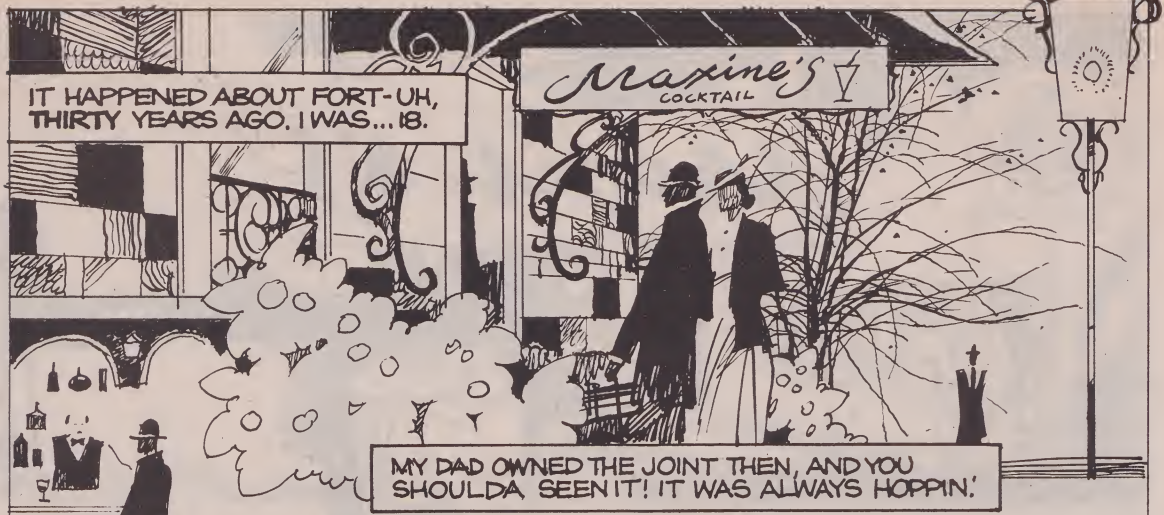
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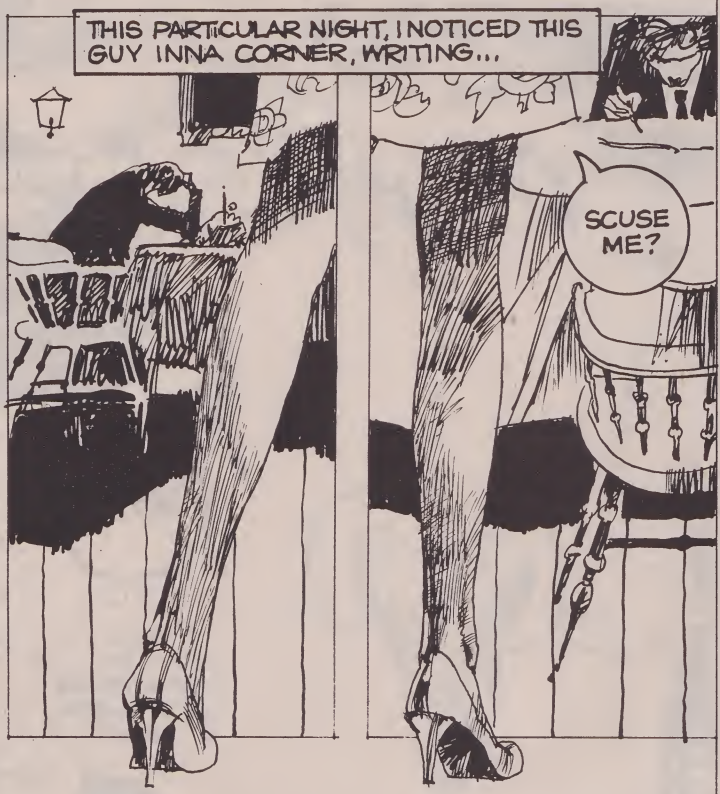
Caliber Presents Vol. 1, No. 5, July 1989. Published by Caliber Press, 31162 W. Warren, Westland, MI 48185. "Maxies" © 1989 by Rafael Nieves. "Street Shadows" © 1989 by Kyle Garrett. "Fragile Balance" © 1989 by J. Calafiore. "Gideon's" © 1989 by Kyle Garrett. "Old World" Story © 1989 by Mark C. Perry, art © 1989 by Jim O'Barr and Guy Davis. "Last Generation" © 1989 by Black Tie Studios. Any similarity to persons live or dead is coincidental and unintended.

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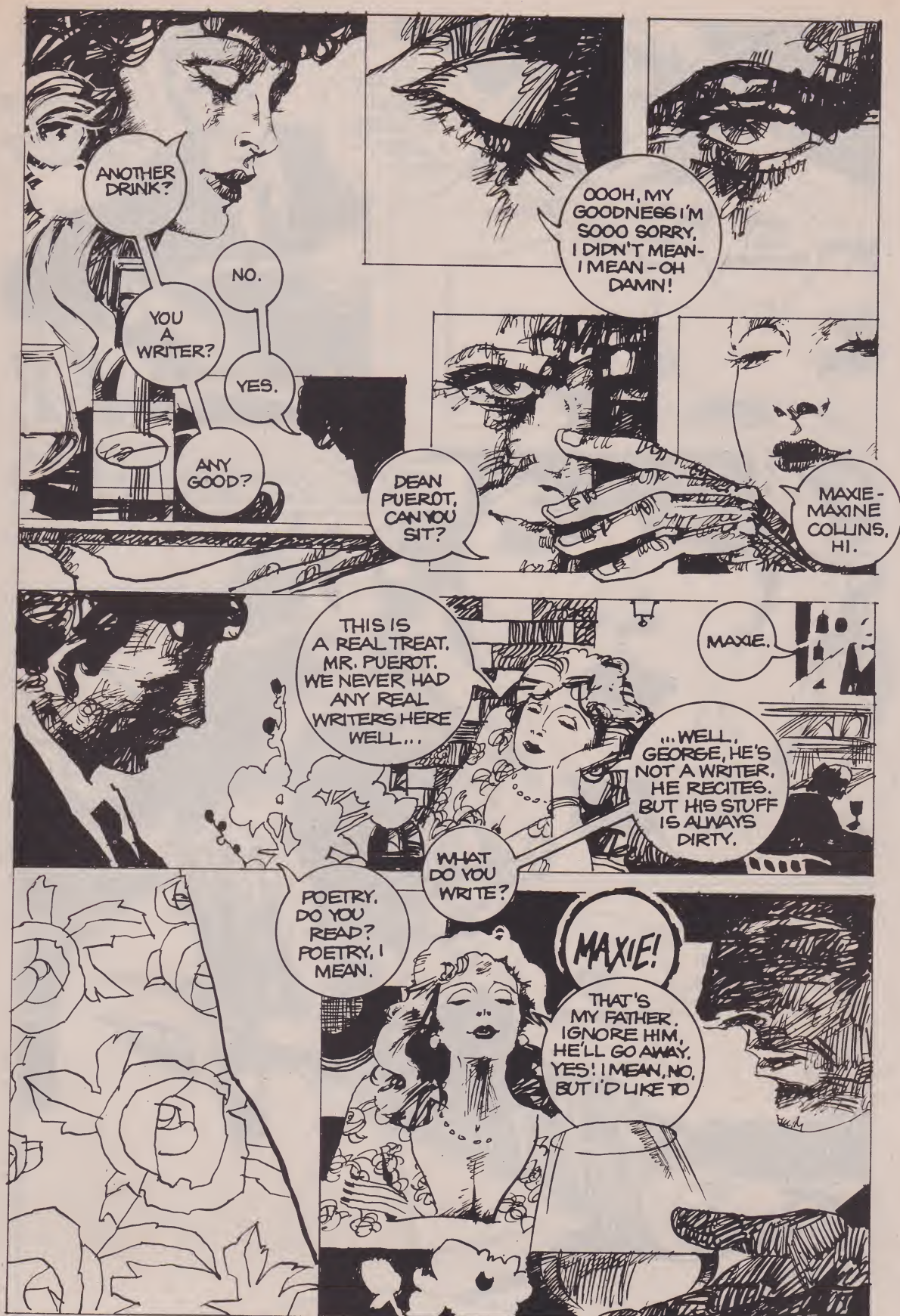


MY DAD OWNED THE JOINT THEN, AND YOU SHOULD'VE SEEN IT! IT WAS ALWAYS HOPPIN'!



THIS PARTICULAR NIGHT, I NOTICED THIS GUY INNA CORNER, WRITING...





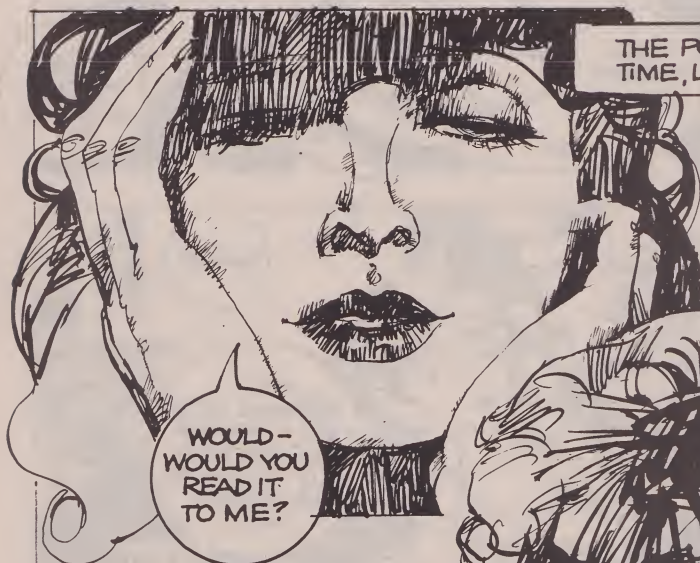


HERE,
JUST
FINISHED.

NO!
I COULDN'T,
I MEAN
IT'S YOURS!
I JUST --
REALLY! I...



WHAT
GOOD IS WRITING
A POEM IF
THERE'S NO ONE
TO READ IT?



WOULD-
WOULD YOU
READ IT
TO ME?

THE POET LOOKED AT ME FOR A LONG
TIME, LIKE HE WAS DECIDING SOMETHING.



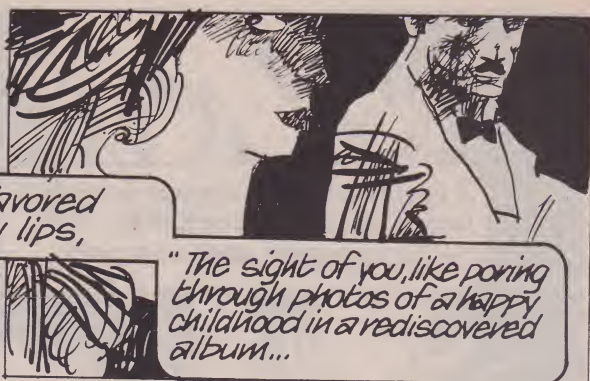
THEN IN A VOICE
FILLED WITH PAIN...

"A
verse
for
Mademoiselle."

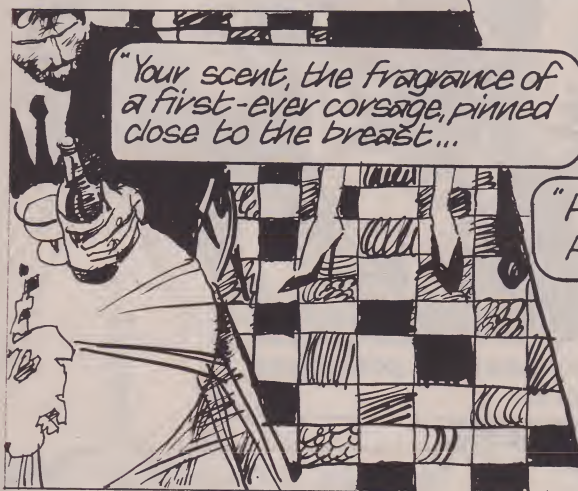




"Your name, a favored
song upon my lips,



"The sight of you, like poring
through photos of a happy
childhood in a rediscovered
album...




"Your scent, the fragrance of
a first-ever corsage, pinned
close to the breast...



"Holding you, a cherished doll of
porcelain...



"Making love..."



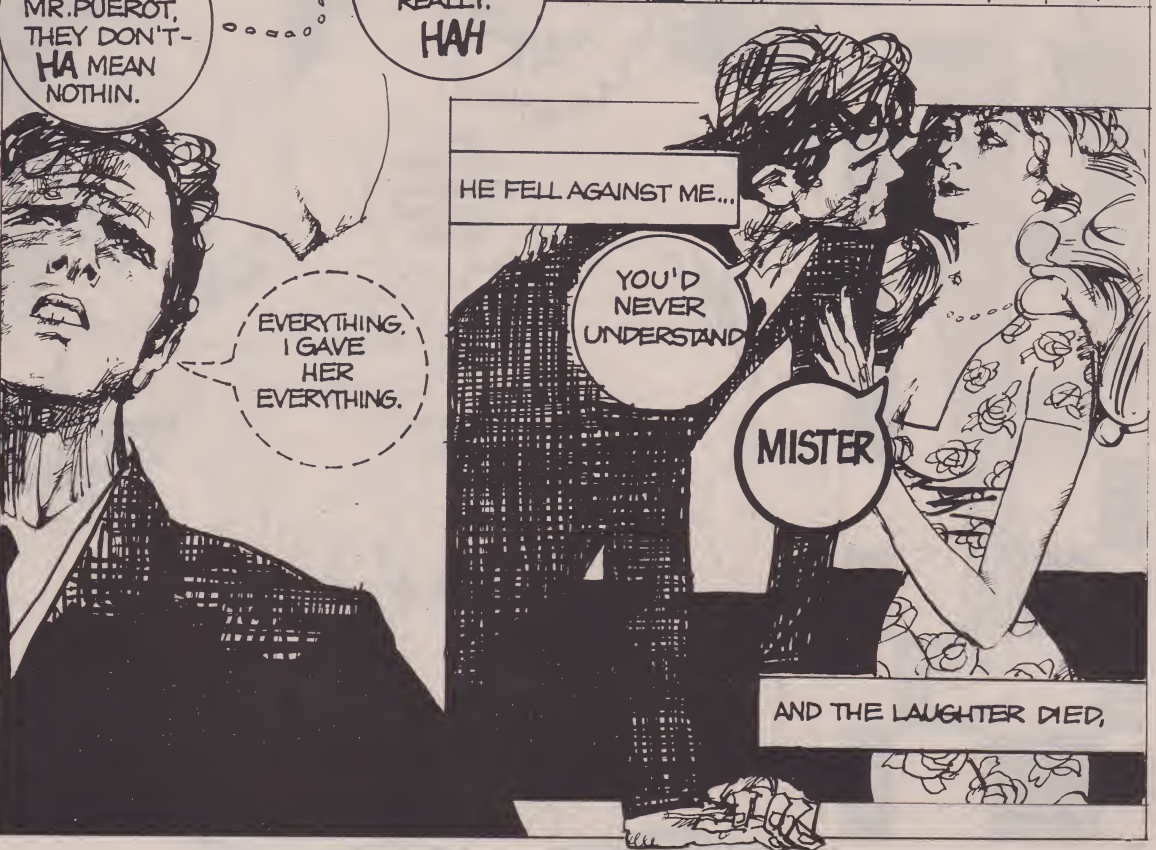
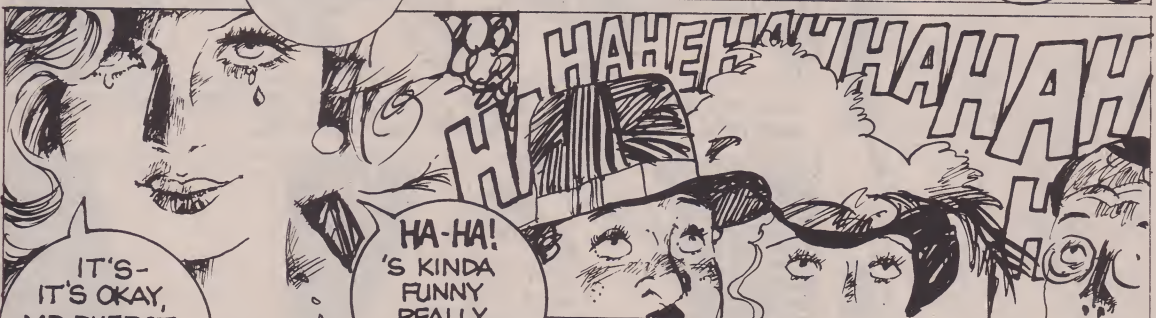
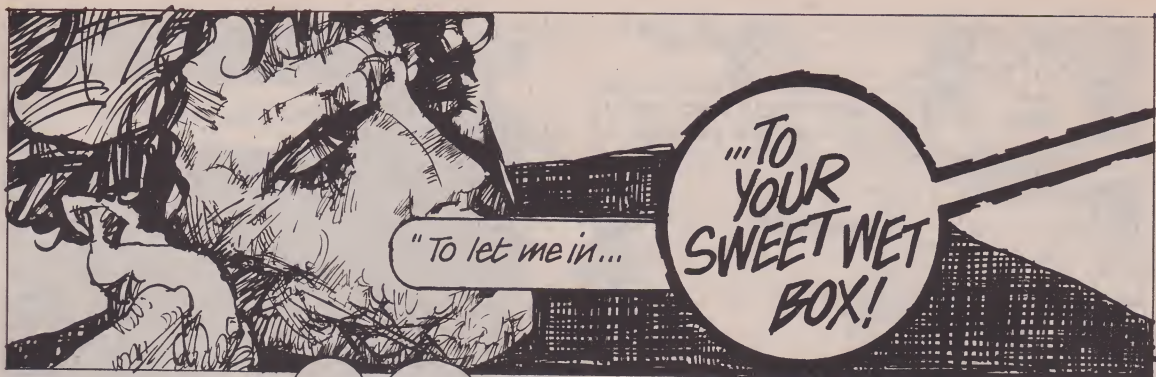
*"A long dreamt of voyage to exotic
lands, suddenly partaken, full
of excitement and mystery."*

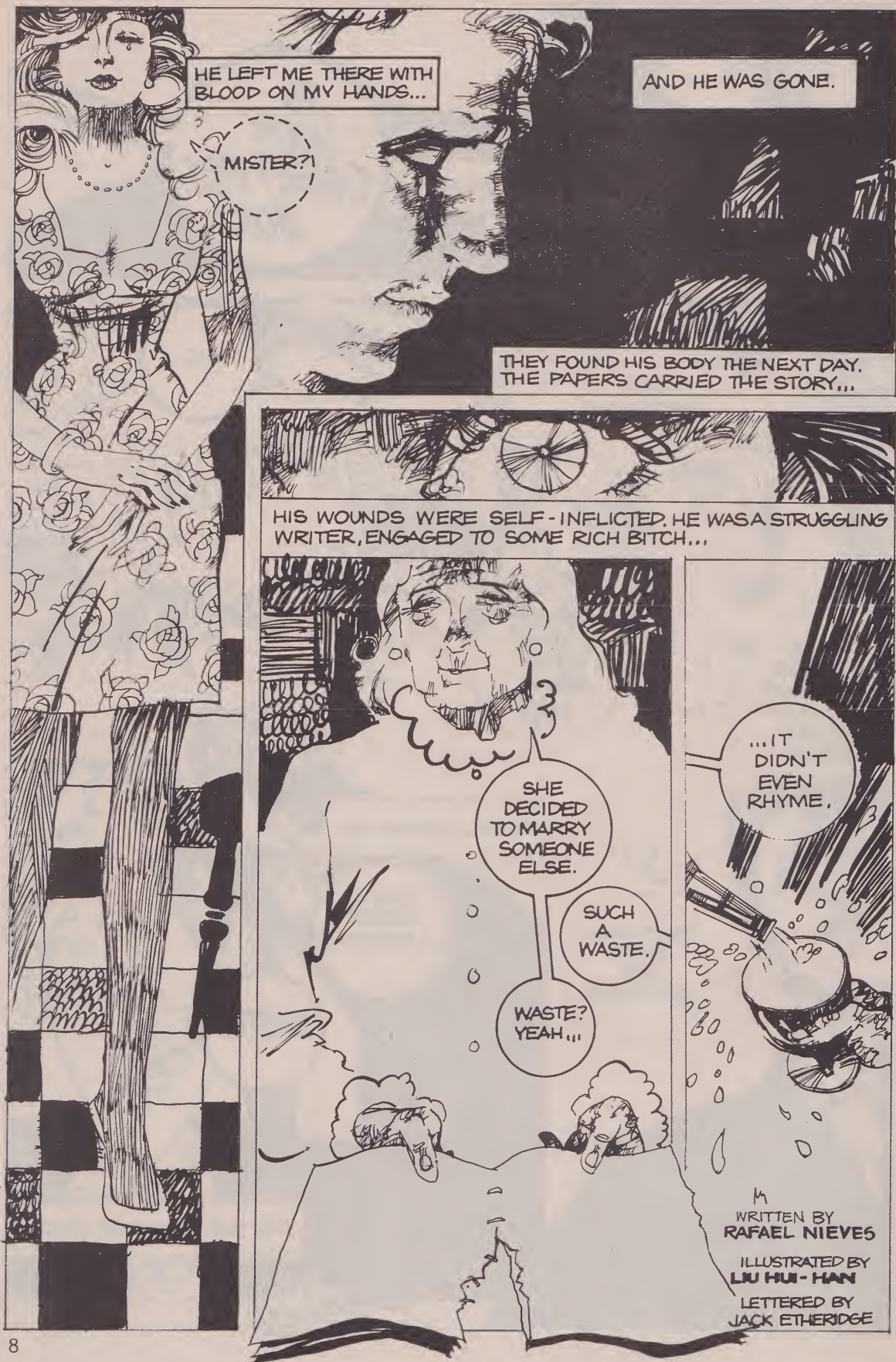
*"Trying to understand you, who begs
to be deciphered..."*

"Yet aids me not at all."

*"You are many things and move
to me: everything, and less..."*

*"And I wait in the shadow of
your threshold, wait for your
whispered consent..."*

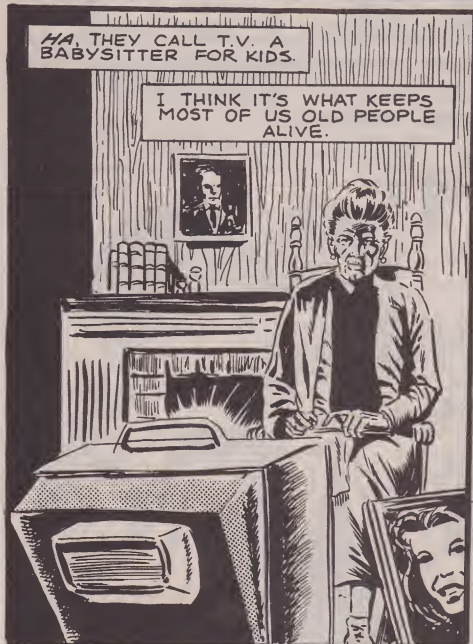
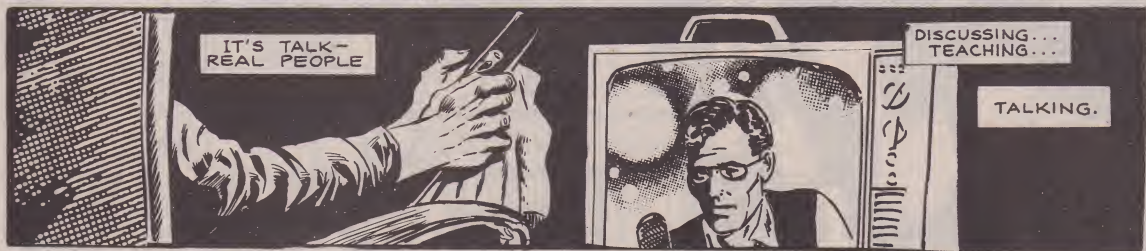




STREET SHADOWS

THE VISIT

—STORY—
KYLE GARRETT
—ART—
KEN LANDGRAF
—LETTERS—
JIM KESSLER







"SO JOHNNY," I SAID, "HOW IS EVERYTHING AT WORK?"



THEN I REMEMBERED... HE WORKED NIGHTS!



HE LIED, HE SAID HE TOOK THE NIGHT OFF TO BE WITH HIS MOM.



MOTHERS LIKE THOSE KIND OF LIES. THEY WERE LIES OF INDULGENT DREAMS.

DREAMS THAT YOUNG MOTHERS CRADLING INFANTS THOUGHT THEY WOULD NEVER HAVE.

WE TALKED, TALKED OF NOTHING, CONVERSATION TO FILL TIME, TALKING TO APPEASE TO PURGE.



I LOVED IT.



THEN, I TALKED ONLY.



HE FIDGETED... PRANCED... AND HID HIS NERVOUS YAWNS.

AND TALKED.





THEN, HE FINALLY ACTED.



HIS MOTIVES FOR COMING WERE EVIDENT AS HIS INTEREST IN MY WORDS PEAKED.



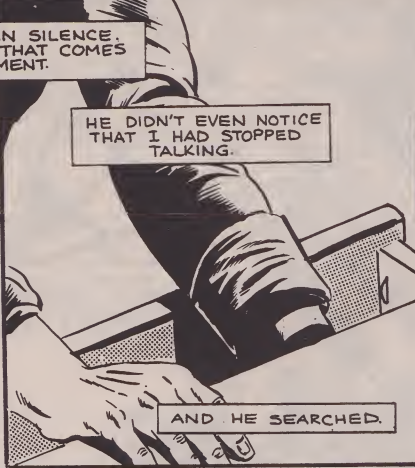
"TELL ME MORE," HE SAID.



HE CASUALLY BEGAN TO SEARCH THE ROOM.



HE SEARCHED AND I SAT IN SILENCE. THAT TYPE OF SILENCE THAT COMES FROM CONTENTMENT.



HE DIDN'T EVEN NOTICE THAT I HAD STOPPED TALKING.

AND HE SEARCHED.



I DECIDED TO HELP.

"WHAT ARE YOU LOOKING FOR JOHNNY?" I ASKED.



"OH NOTHING," HE SAID. BUT HE KEPT LOOKING.

WE BOTH KNEW HE WAS LYING.

"YOU KNOW I ALWAYS KEPT THE MONEY IN THE VASE ON TOP," I TOLD HIM.



IT WASN'T MUCH BUT I KNEW HE NEEDED IT.



AFTER ALL, IT'S ONLY MONEY.



I KNEW IT WASN'T ENOUGH, BECAUSE HE ASKED ME AGAIN TO TELL HIM MORE.

"TELL ME ABOUT THE GOOD OLD DAYS," HE SAID.

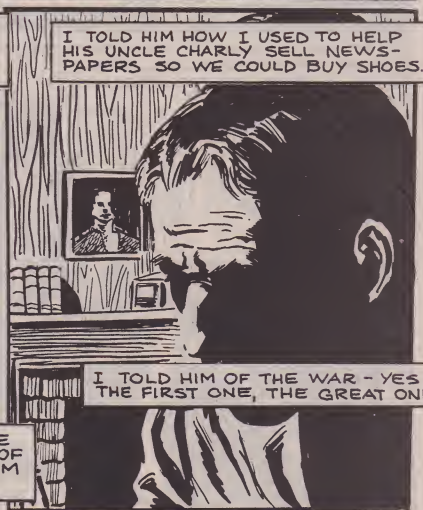


SO, I DID.



OF CRESCENT-HOLED OUTHOUSES, OF CHURNING BUTTER, OF ICE BOXES AND WOOD BURNING STOVES.

I TOLD HIM OF HORSES AND CARRIAGES, AND THE VERY FIRST CAR I EVER SAW.



I TOLD HIM HOW I USED TO HELP HIS UNCLE CHARLY SELL NEWS-PAPERS SO WE COULD BUY SHOES.

I TOLD HIM OF THE WAR - YES THE FIRST ONE, THE GREAT ONE.

OF RAINY NIGHTS WHEN WE'D HUDDLE AROUND THE RADIO SO ALL EIGHT OF US COULD GO TO A SINGLE BEDROOM AND RE-ENACT THE MYSTERIES.



THAT I WASN'T ALWAYS OLD.

I TOLD HIM OF MY YOUTH.

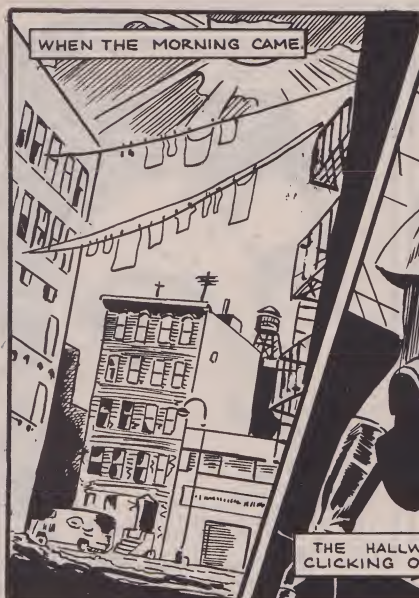
AND I LET THE DREAMS OF PAST TAKE ME.



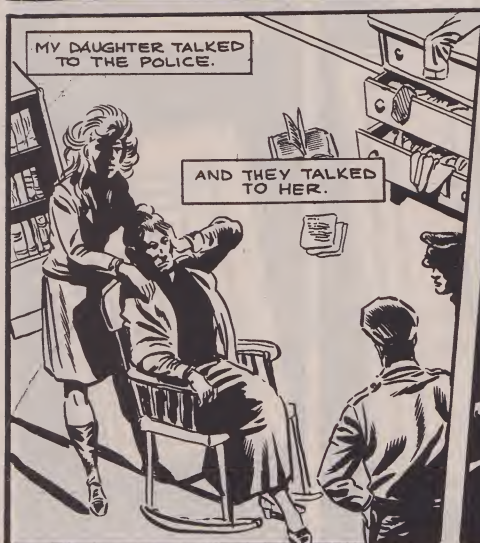
BUT I KNEW...



HE KEPT LOOKING.



THE HALLWAY ECHOED WITH THE
CLICKING OF MY DAUGHTER'S BOOTS.







MY LITTLE BOY WHO TALKED OF WEALTH...

... AND THE BIG HOUSE HE WAS GOING TO BUY ME...



... AND THE GRANDCHILDREN HE WOULD BRING TO VISIT.

THE ONE WHO WOULD GIVE ME THAT LOOK THAT CRIED FOR A HUG BUT HE WAS TOO BIG FOR IT.



UNTIL HE DECIDED HE WAS BIG ENOUGH TO HUG AGAIN.

THE BOY WHO TRIED TO BECOME A MAN WHEN HIS FATHER DIED...

WHO ALL OF A SUDDEN BECAME ONE.



THE BOY WHO WANTED TO FOLLOW HIS FATHER'S FOOTSTEPS...



AND MARCHED OFF TO THE NEXT GRAVESITE A YEAR LATER.



MY BOY, MY JOHNNY.



DEAD? I KNEW THAT.

DIDN'T SHE THINK I KNEW THAT?



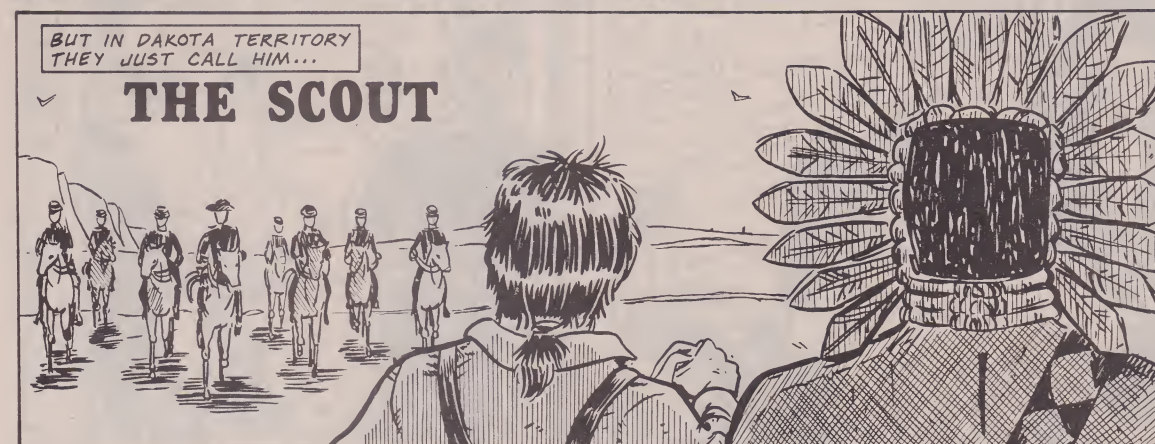
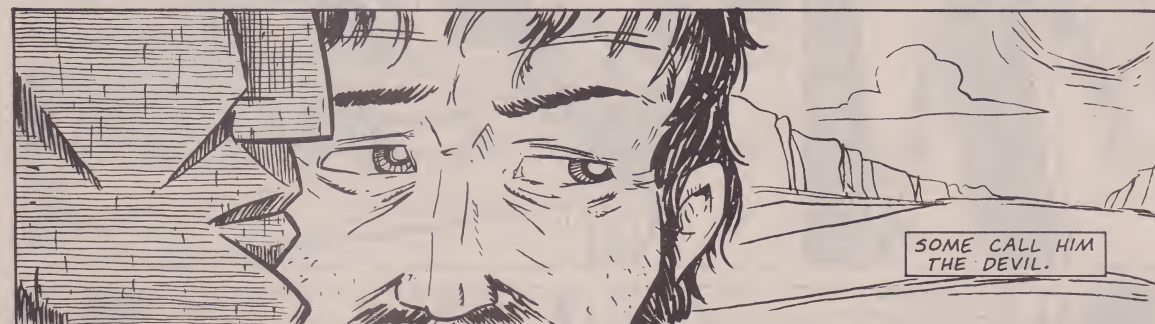
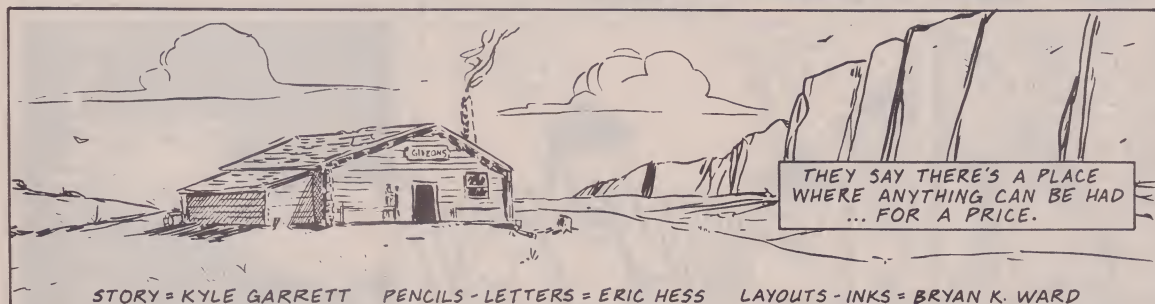
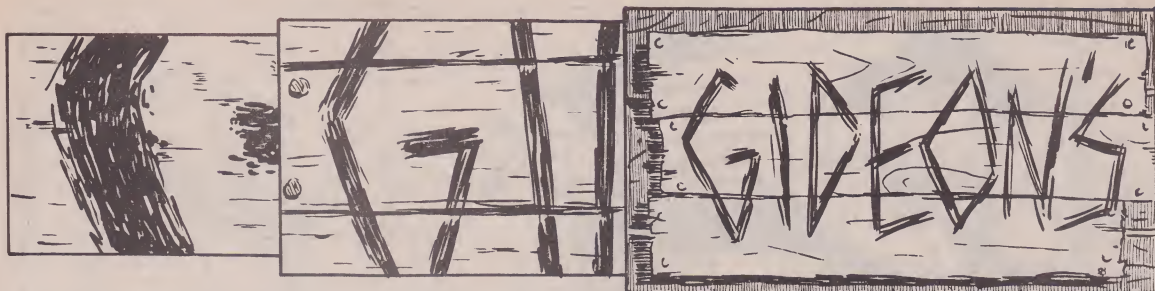
BUT I HAD JOHNNY BACK - EVEN IF IT WAS FOR ONLY ONE NIGHT.

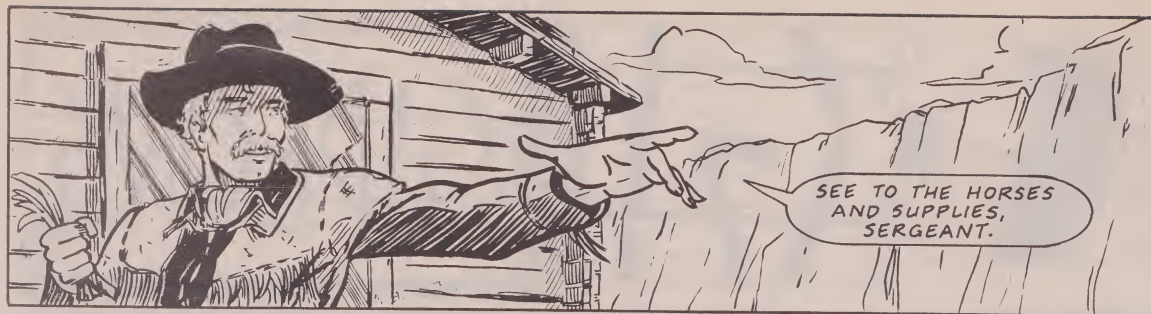
AND I HURRIED TO THE KITCHEN TO BAKE SOME OATMEAL COOKIES.

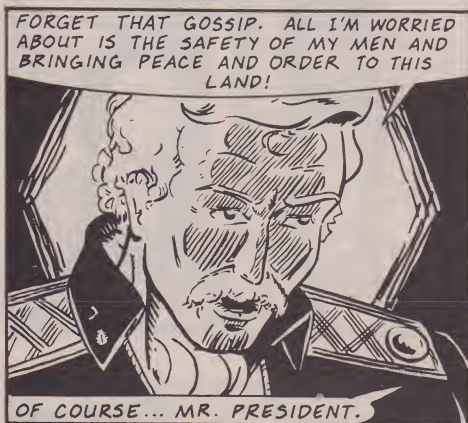
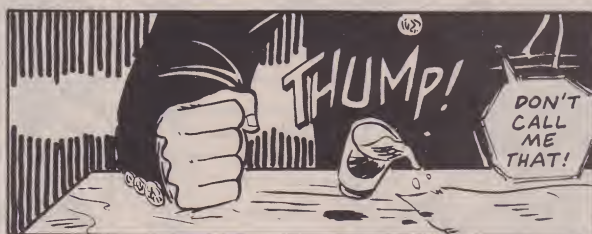
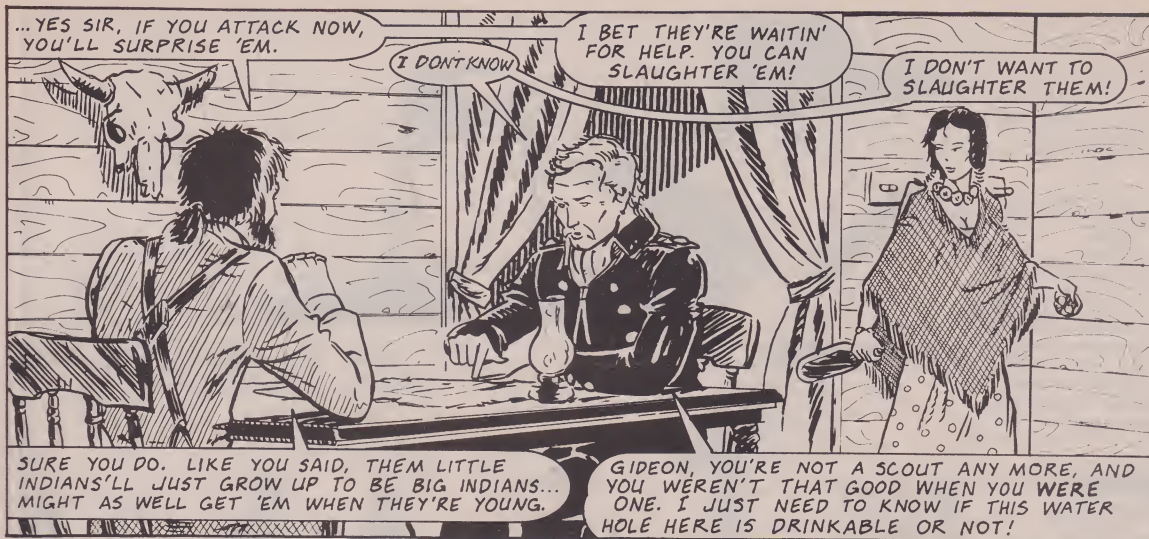


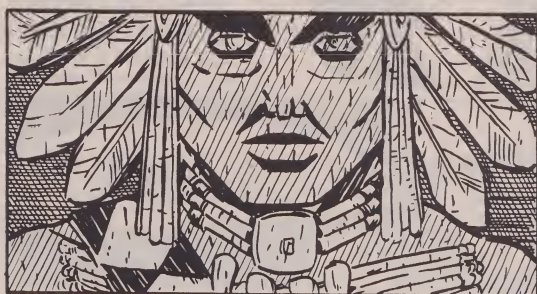
WHO KNOWS?

HE MIGHT COME BACK.



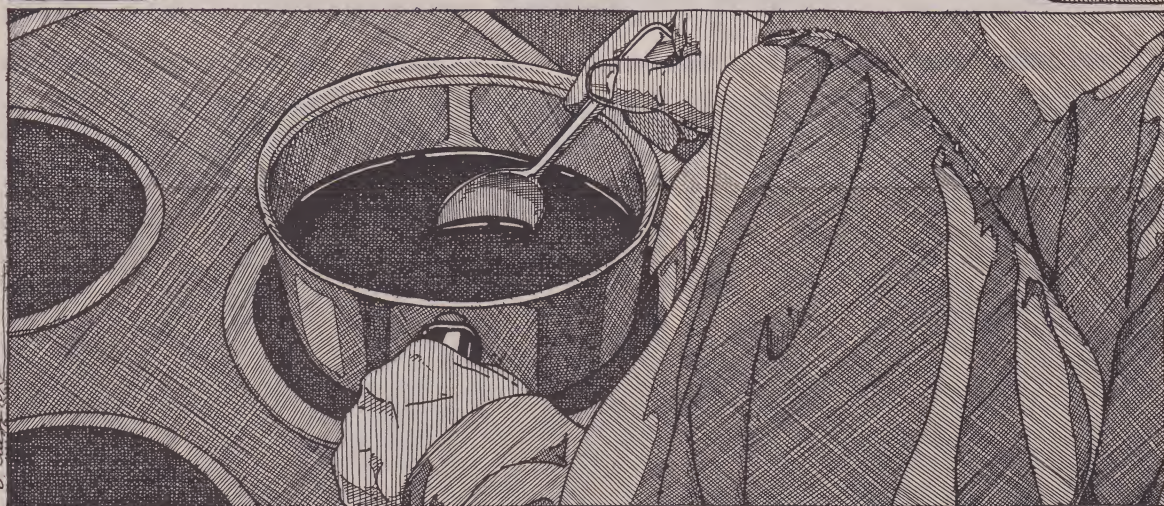






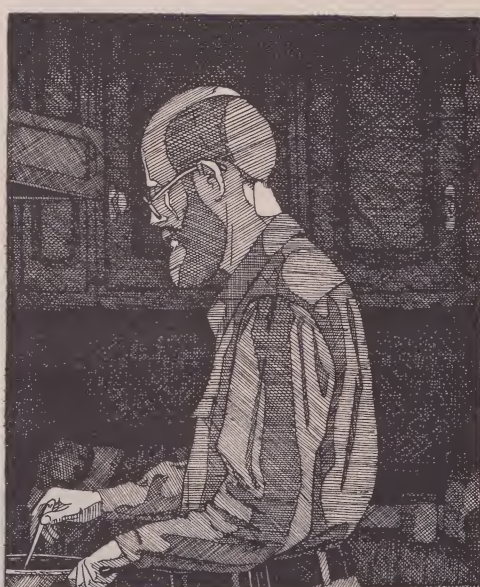
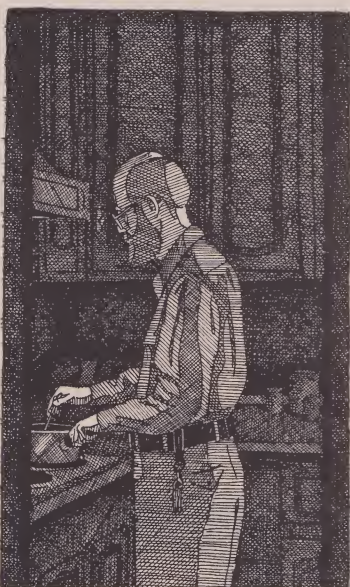
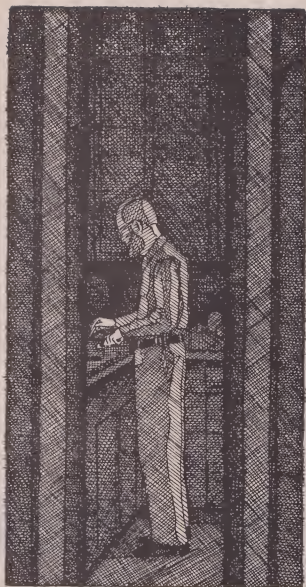
END

FRAGILE BALANCE

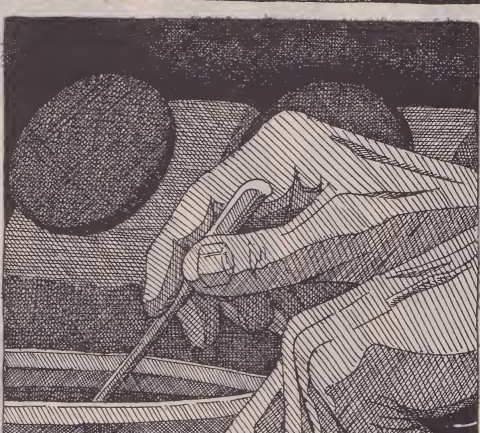
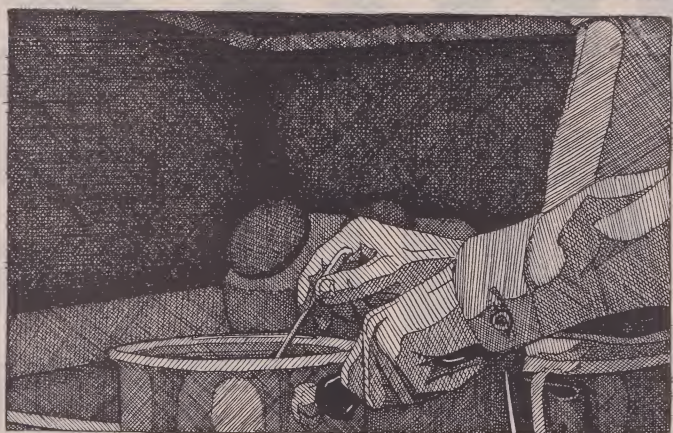


BY J. CALAFIORE

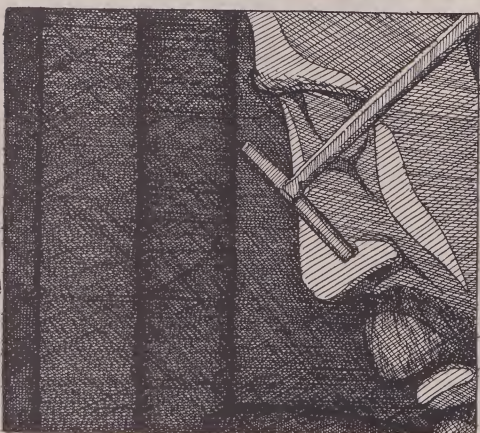
(SPECIAL THANKS TO ART REDPATH)



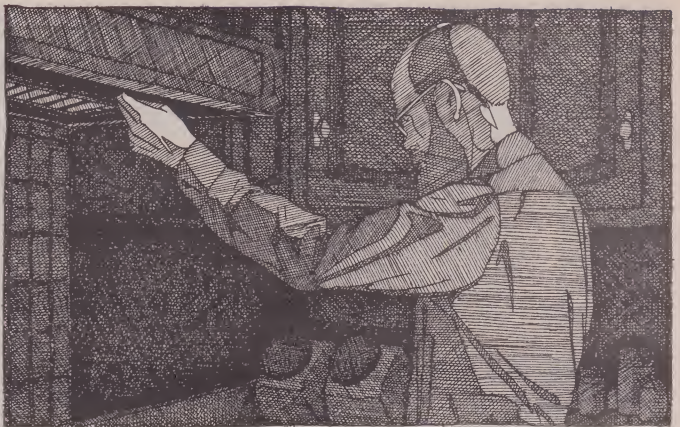
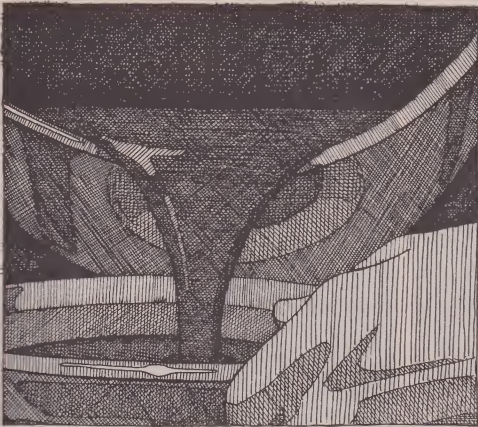
THE WALLS OF AN EMPTY HOUSE CLOSE IN LIKE DARKNESS,



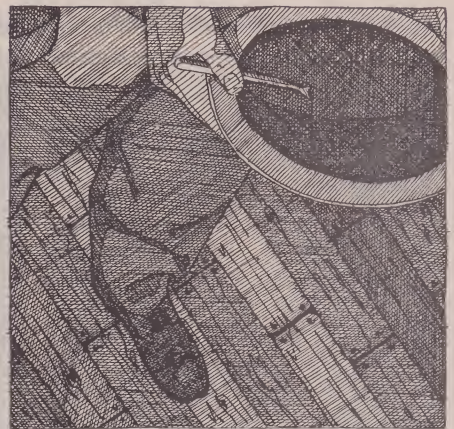
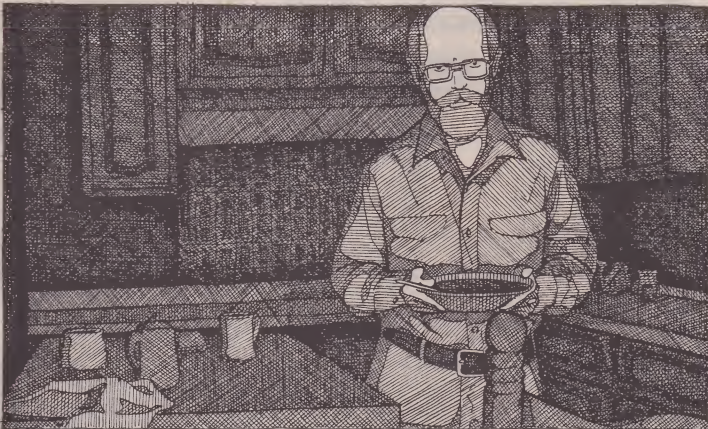
SURROUNDING AND SUFFOCATING; THREATENING TO OVERWHELM.



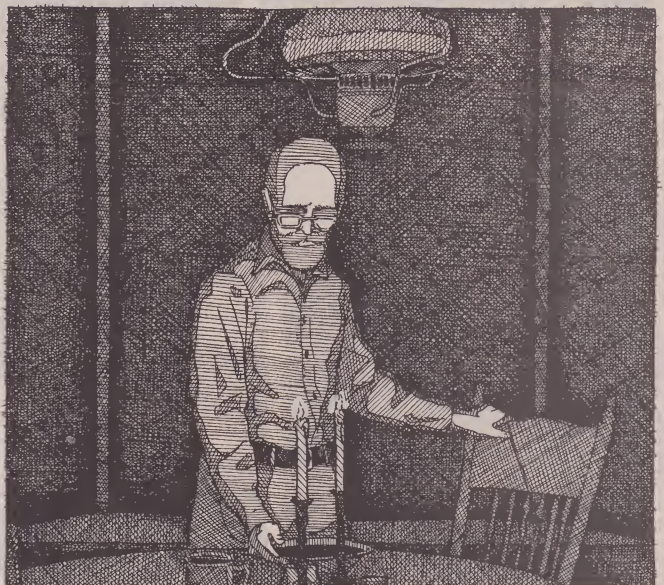
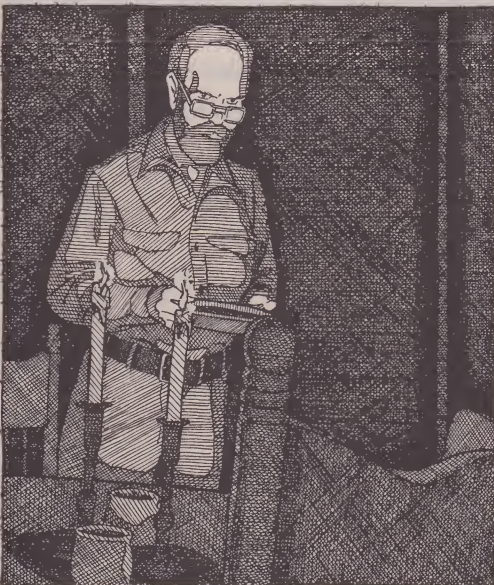
HELD CHECKED ONLY IN FRAGILE BALANCES.



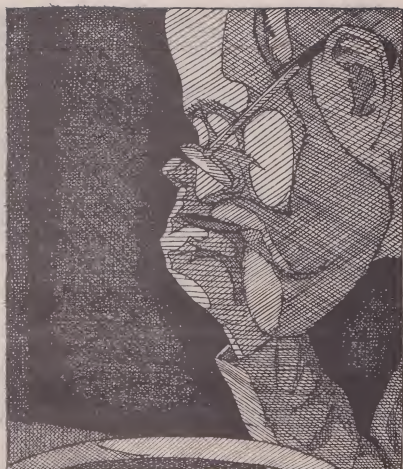
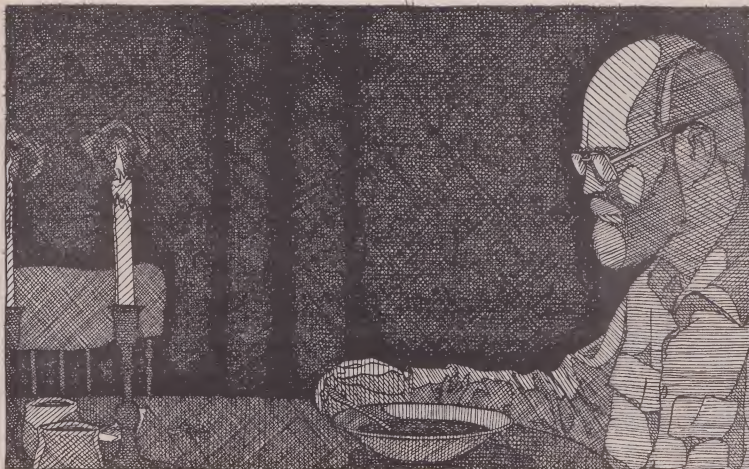
TEPID EFFORTS AT BEST, STIRRED AND POURED OUT.



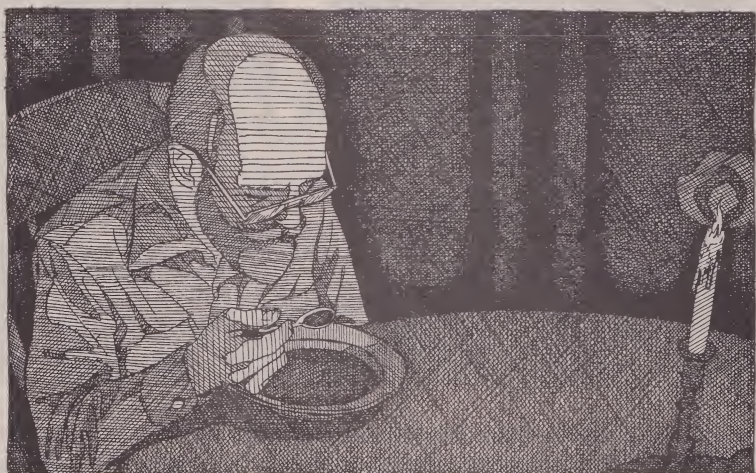
LIKE SLUGGISH, LADEN STEPS THAT LEAD TO THE VAULT,



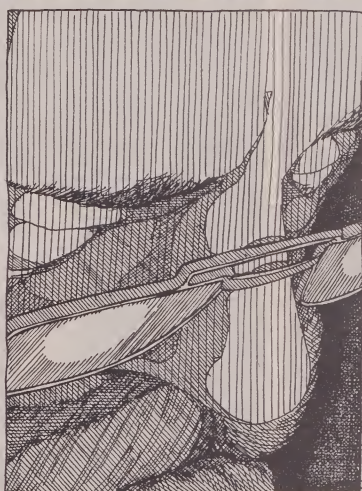
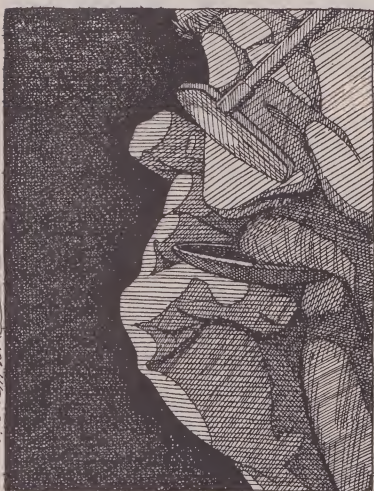
FIRMLY UNDER GRINDING HEELS.



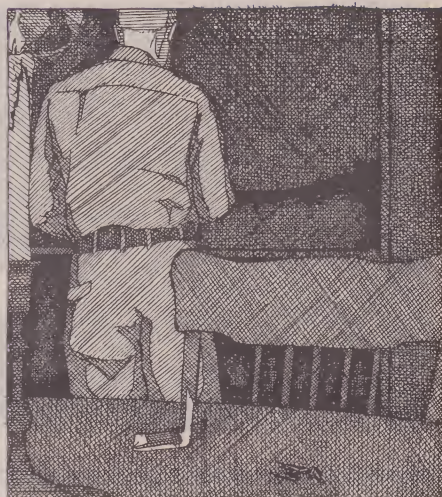
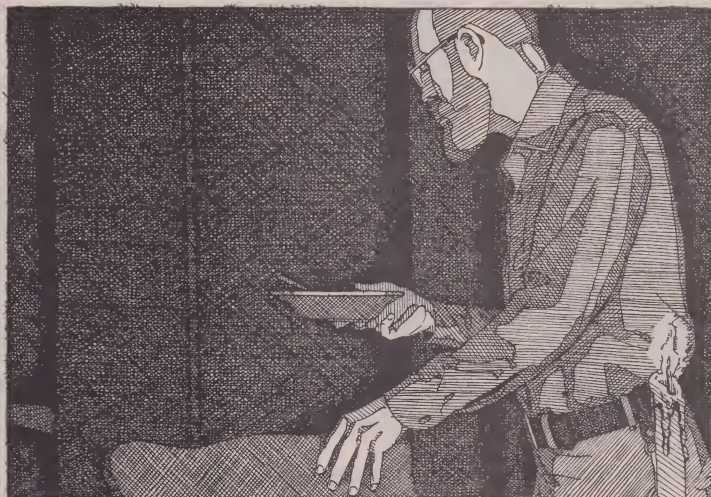
GROUND INTO PLACE. SUSTAINED AND COMFORTED ONLY IN WARM SOUP.



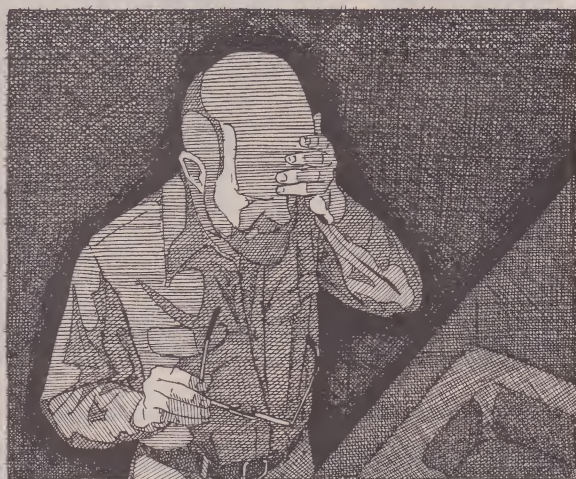
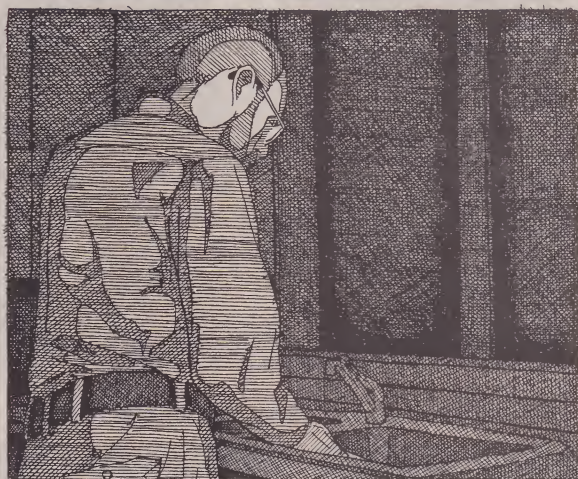
MATED BY CANDLELIGHT AND DISCARDED MATCHES.



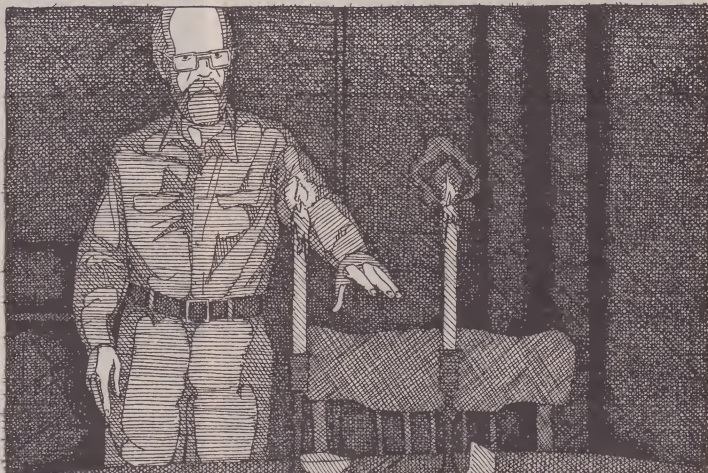
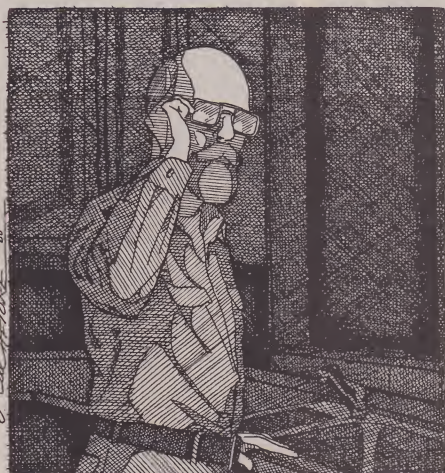
AND CLINGING PRECARIOUSLY, WITH MIND PRESSED BETWEEN FOREFINGER AND THUMB.



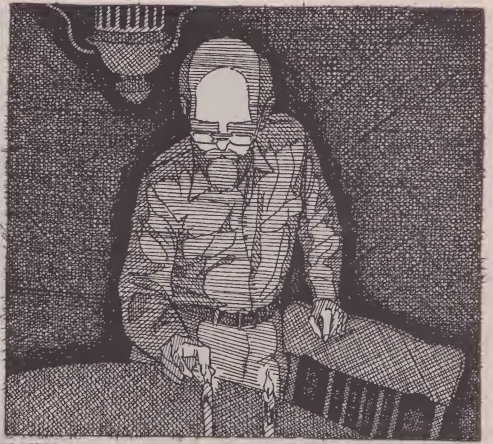
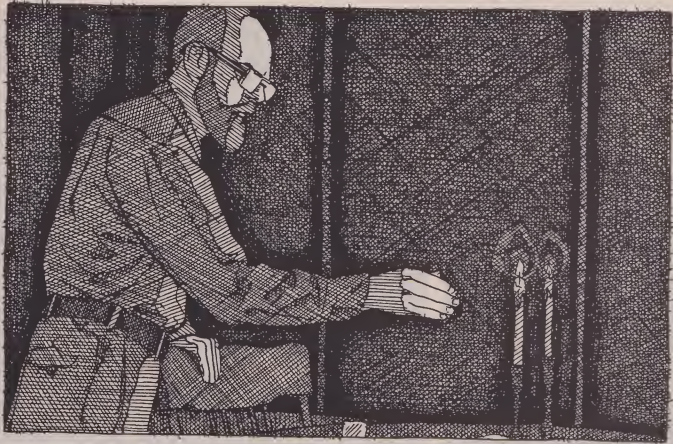
A FRAGILE BALANCE MAINTAINED



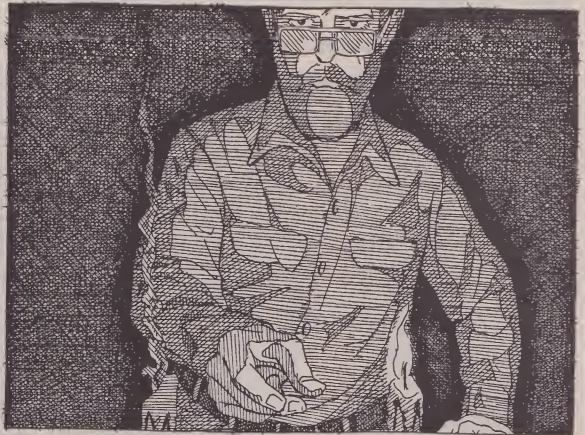
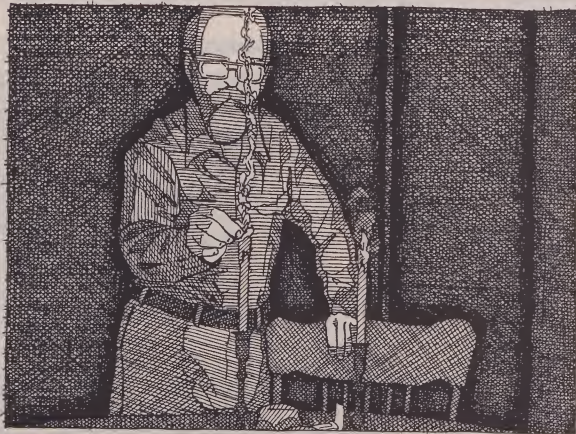
IN A STRUGGLE TO CONTROL SOLITUDE'S DEAFENING CLAMOR.



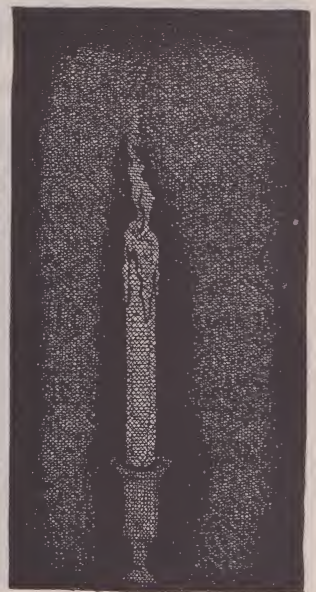
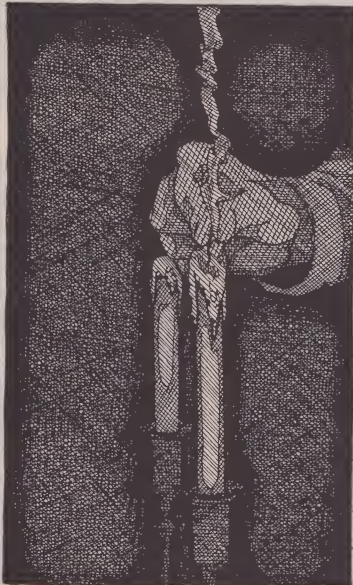
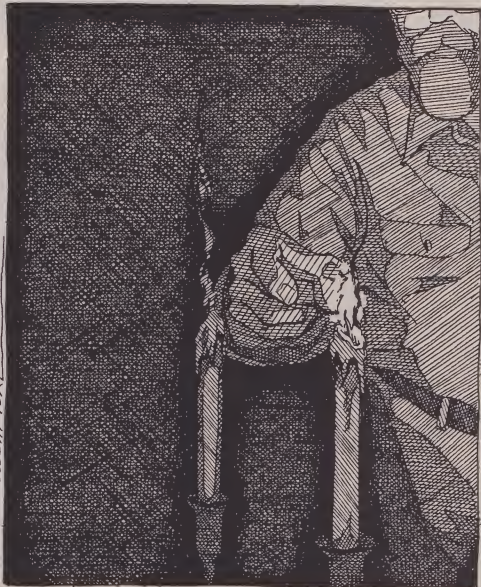
UNDER THE PRESSURE, LIFE BLURS TO INSIGNIFICANT MEMORIES.



TO WORTHLESS IMAGES OF SPENT EFFORTS.



OF SQUANDERED YEARS WHICH, IN THE END, ARE NEVER LASTING.



FINALLY, LIFE IS EXTINGUISHED, AND ONLY DARKNESS REMAINS.

IT IS A LARGE, GLEAMING PEARL,
SITTING ENCASED IN THE BACK
ROOM OF AN OCCULT STORE.
HE WANTS IT. HE IS A THIEF. A
HUSBAND. A FAILURE AT BOTH.
STEALING THE PEARL WILL
PROVE THAT HIS LUCK HAS
CHANGED. BUT THE PEARL IS
MORE THAN A GEM. IT IS A
PRISON; AND WHAT'S INSIDE
WANTS VERY BADLY TO
ESCAPE...

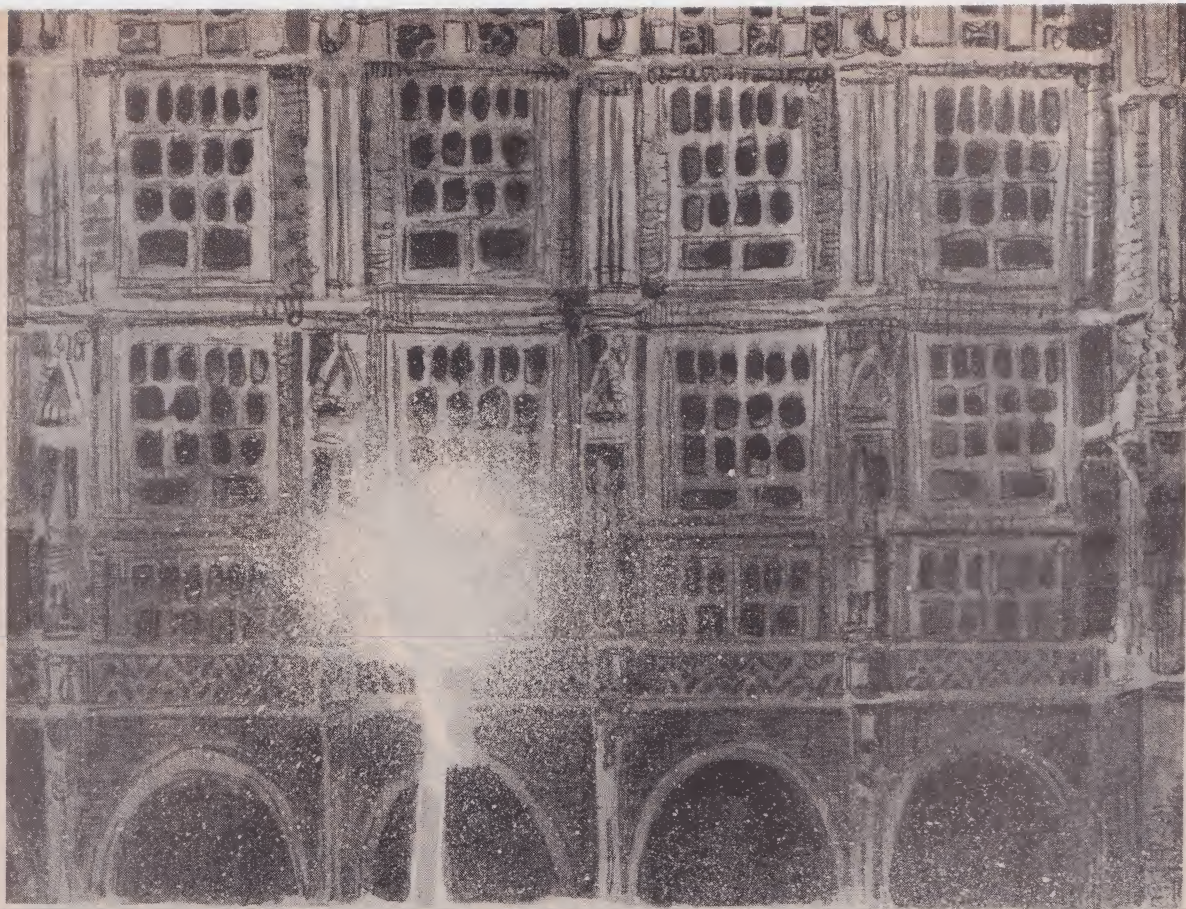


Horse!

*The only thing
worse than want-
ing something...
is getting it.*



A 3-PART
GRAPHIC ALBUM
COMING SOON
FROM
**Slave Labor
Graphics**



OLD WORLD

by
Mark C. Perry

It was another dreary Friday night in Munich. I had been in Germany three months and still could not get used to the sudden changes of weather: one day bright and hot, the next cold and rainy as a Michigan November. I had been deserted for the weekend by my friend and roommate, Guenther, as he was visiting his Fraulein in Passau. It was quite late, past twelve, and just about everything in the city was closed. It is hard really to picture Munich as a city; it has no skyscrapers, its nightlife consists of discos and student cafes, but oddly I always feel more nervous there than, say, New York or London. There's an oppressive quality to the neatness and straight-lined buildings of Munich. The fascist architecture of the Nazis overbears the grander quality of the older buildings.

That night, I wandered over to the Marienplatz. I loved that place. It is a great open area surrounded by medieval buildings and stored stuffed into tiny rooms. During the day it is packed with people, though I have no idea where they all come from. The music students are always playing — everything from Mozart to bad imitations of Sting. Sometimes a mime permanently stuck in the seventies shows up, or a very dubious clown in smeared makeup. And you must always watch out for the little old ladies; they're quite vicious here and will knock you to the ground without a second thought if you get in their way. I envision them muttering to themselves, "We could have won, why didn't we win?"

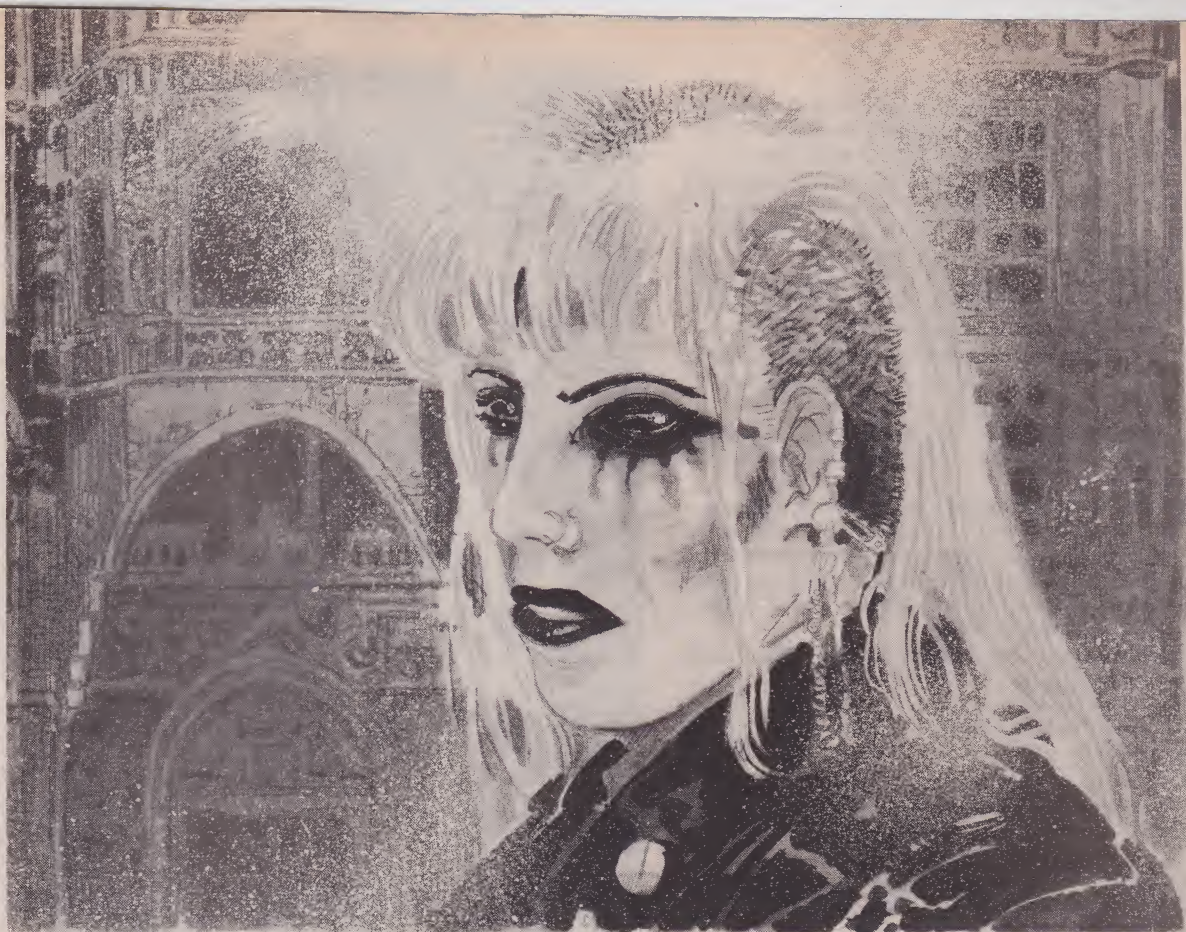
What I'm getting at is that, except for the grey drizzle, it was a perfectly normal night in Munich. In the Marienplatz, quite a few people were straggling about. It seems to be a German

custom for people to simply walk around and look in store windows at all hours of the day. Somehow there's something forlorn about this. Everything closes at six on the weekdays and twelve on Saturday with nothing open on Sunday. So the people just wander up and down window shopping. It always reminds me of *The Dawn of the Dead*, where the zombies wander about the mall. It's always been amusing to me before, but now . . .

Germany can be frightening, but not like, say, England with its haunted fogs. In Germany it's the oppressiveness of the constant reminder of the Nazis. Of the evil in man. It's there, a weight, a sign on the Autobahn for the next turn-off: Dachau. Or at the zoo, where some dumb kid etched swastikas on the windows of the aquarium exhibits. It's there in the churches, in the memorial for the dead with their iron crosses, and fading pictures of the young men who died in their smart SS uniforms. Even in the villages you can't get a sense of the Old World, of fairies and goblins and what not. The evil comes from men here, only men. Or so I thought.

They were sitting together on the stairs of the Rathaus. It's a fabulous building with one of those medieval clocks that near life-sized figures come out of and dance about two or three times a day. My favorite part is in the corner of the Rathaus, where a dragon curls and slithers up the wall to threaten the unwary people in the frieze above.

There were nine of them, five young men and four Madchens. They were dressed up in black leather and ripped jeans, the recognizable uniform of punkers around the world. Some people get very nervous when they see such a group, but not me. I'm an old American punker and I've learned punk here in Europe had taken quite a different turn than it did in the States. The German punks, at least, tend to be nihilistic, which doesn't make them scary, just rather redundant and boring.



I intended to pass them by, but one, obviously the leader, called out to me. Naturally, I immediately forgot what little German I knew, so I answered with a quiet "hello."

"You're American, then," he answered in a very proper British accent.

"Yes."

"I could tell by the way you walk," he answered with a friendly smile. I had been in Europe long enough to know that to the Europeans we Americans tend to walk rather like gorillas. Which doesn't matter to me, since to us they tend to walk, as we used to say in grade school, like sissies.

I wandered over to them and soon found myself sitting in the middle of the group talking about the differences between the States and Germany (it seems that's about the only conversation I ever have with Germans). I felt quite at ease; after all, I dressed the same as they, and if two had rather grotesque mohawks, I surely had the finest braid of the bunch. You see, I'm what in the States we call a smartass. I like to have fun, I don't take anything seriously except myself, and even that isn't a constant thing. I was here in Europe to have an adventure, see the Old World, check out the museums and maybe meet some cute Deutsche Madchens. But I was hardly what you'd call a typical tourist.

I should say that I come from a tough neighborhood. I've been in my share of trouble, and well, frankly, I just don't think there are many things that scare me (except sharks, sharks scare the shit out of me). So there was nothing threatening to me when they asked if I'd like to go to the Isar river with them and party a bit. Sure, they were tough-looking, but not as tough as I was used to. I went. I went with them.

The Isar is a pretty little river that winds about in southern Germany. Its water is blue-green and cold, and its banks made of white, smooth stone which, I am pleased to say, on sunny days are often as not inhabited by nude sunbathers. Whatever

Germany's problems, they do have pretty women who tend to at least go topless at the least bit of heat. This, for an American, is quite close to Nirvana.

Everything was going fine, we had some of that bitter German beer, plenty of Marlboros, a lousy radio station turned way up on the ghetto blaster, and the river to ourselves. The rain had stopped and the moon lightened the packed clouds to a dirty silver about it.

"We know some people in the States," Michael, the leader, said rather abruptly.

"Oh?"

"Ja, like us," Helmut added in with an annoying whinny-like sound that passed for his laugh. Helmut had been making that noise at odd intervals for the last hour and was beginning to annoy me. He was, of course, one of the ones with a mohawk. His was bright red.

"Friends?" I asked, more interested in the little blonde that kept eyeing me than the answer.

"Friends?" Michael made an odd noise in his throat. "No, not that."

"Not bloody likely," Helmut whinnied again. "Michael hates the bastards. Don't you, Michael?" Before Michael could answer the other mohawk spoke for the first time. He was a big bastard, his silver mohawk putting him well over six and a half feet, and solid muscles, too.

"Oh shit," he said and pointed. (Actually, he said "Oh Scheisse.") We all looked to see two figures approaching us. They were women of indeterminable age, tall and exceptionally thin, dressed like Hollywood hookers. Michael immediately leaped out and, followed by the big one, moved to intercept the women. An immediate argument began in German. All I could make out was the word "haben" (to have), and pale fingers pointed at me. What is this, I thought, do they think I want a hooker? I moved to sit next to the cute blonde.

She looked up nervously at me, then away. She had startlingly green eyes. She was really quite beautiful. I immediately forgot the others and began to wonder if I was in love — again.

"Can you translate for me?" I asked in an unfortunately high voice. She said nothing but gently touched her brow. Startled, I sat back. She stared at me, hard, like she was trying to tell me something (but not what I wanted to hear).

"You should leave," she said in a very gentle voice. Her accent was more pronounced than Michael's. The Bavarian accent is very soft sounding to Americans and charming.

"Why?" Another sat down by me. His name was Wolfgang (really). He seemed the quiet sort, shy but friendly nevertheless.

"Listen to her," he whispered. "You've got to go now."

"Try the river," she said, "you might get away that way." I looked at the cold water rushing by. I really had no interest in jumping in.

"I don't know what you're talking about," I answered, getting a little nervous and very confused. "I can take care of myself." Wolfgang bit his lip and turned away with what sounded like a small whimper. She reached over again and stroked my hand where a long knife scar lay. I hadn't told any of them where I got it or how, but somehow she knew.

"It won't be enough," she said softly. "Please, we don't want you, you don't belong here."

"Who doesn't belong here?" It was, of course, that swine Helmut. "Hmm? Tell me, Brigitte, who doesn't belong here?" She glared fiercely at him and my protective instincts flared. Slowly, I stood up. But then I figured they meant to rob me. No big deal — I put out this punk and that would settle things. But I didn't get the chance to. Michael came up and stood between us.

"They're gone," he said to the others, though he looked at me. "They went after some druggy." He said it in English.

"Look, pal," I started. I didn't want to mix with Michael. He was the leader as once long ago I had been. He was tough. Black hair with cold blue eyes and hard lean muscle. I liked him actually. That's strange now that I think of it. Yeah, he and I were a lot alike, we recognized one another. I didn't want to challenge him, to face him down on his own turf. I liked him . . .

Just then I heard a short abrupt shout, followed by a scream for help; over and over it was repeated. Without thinking I started to run toward the sound. Michael reached out and grabbed my arm, jerking me to a stop. His hand, his fingers — he was so damned strong, I couldn't have broken that grip if I wanted to. But now I was starting to get mad.

"Let me go."

"You can't help."

"They need help."

"They — you poor idiot, they don't need any help." He stressed the word, but I wasn't listening.

"Dammit, Michael." Somehow I shrugged my arm free. "Listen to that." The cries for help had dwindled down to a pathetic sobbing. "Listen!" I shouted. "We've got to help, we can — —" and he met my eyes. I can't say what he was thinking, but I knew he wasn't afraid, not of me, not of the crying, not of anything.

"It's too late anyway," he said. "They've already eaten his soul." And at that the noises stopped.

Up to now I've tried to write this dispassionately — no, that's not true, I've tried to be clever and light, though it's all come out stilted somehow. I wanted to, I don't know — keep my distance from it all. But now I can remember the moon in the clouds, the wet grass gleaming dully, the sound of the river, and how they all stood up and silently surrounded me. They made no noise when they moved, not even their clothes rustled. One minute I was arguing with Michael, the next — oh, God, I can never, never forget.

I can remember edging away, reaching in my jacket pocket to grab the cold handle of the switchblade that Guenther had







given me just the day before. I can remember it all, but most of all I remember their eyes. They changed, they weren't human, they were like an animal's at night caught in the glare of passing car lights. Even her's, even Brigitte's.

"Jesus God."

"They would have gotten you," Michael said. "They wanted you. You're strong and hard. You have the hot blood of violence in you and the sweet taste of innocence and hope. An odd combination. We can smell your type a kilometer away. They wanted you and I risked much in keeping them away." I whipped out the switchblade and it flashed into the moonlight with a sharp click.

"That won't help you," he said.

"How about a cross?" I smiled, but drool came out of the corner of my mouth and I couldn't hold the blade straight. I'm proud I said that, though; I'll always be proud I had the balls to say that.

"No good either," he answered.

"What happens to me?"

"You become like us." He shrugged. "Mostly they stay dead, but you have too much memory in you; you'll become one of us."

"And what is that?"

"Nosferatu, my American friend." Helmut pushed his way to Michael's side, "the living dead, vampires — you know, like Dracula."

"No!" It was a whine, that word. I pleaded in that word. I

begged with everything I had in that word.

"Oh yes," Helmut whinnied again. "And you know what we do? We don't drink your blood, oh no, we don't care about your blood. It's your soul we want, friend. We want to rip it from you and tear it apart and shred it and eat it, that's what we do." I can't say if he had fangs. I can't say. I can't say, I still, even now. . . I was crying, crying. I can cry now. It was more, it is more than fear. Not this way, Jesus never this way!

"Shred my soul," I whispered, "shred my soul." I giggled, I think, and my tongue felt strange and alien. "I always thought we had a soul . . . But now you'd take mine. You eat it!" I shouted. "What are you to do such a thing? The undead? A vampire from a movie? Fuck you!" I screamed and looked right at Brigitte. "And fuck you, too!" I crouched down, holding my blade in front of me. "Fuck you!" I screamed so loud it tore my throat, but the anger, the outrage helped. Even now it does. "You try it, you do it, you bastards! Go ahead, but make sure you eat it all, or by god I'll find you. I'll tear more than your soul — yeah, okay. So it's over, right? No afterlife even. Okay, well — fuck it. Come on, you monsters or whatever you are. Maybe I can't kill you, maybe I can't hurt you, but I'm gonna cut that bastard's balls off!"

And I leaped at Helmut and I stuck the guy. Oh yeah, I ripped in and up, right through his filthy stomach. I can hear it now. I can hear that sound, that tear, that rip. But I did it. Damn right, I did it.

Michael grabbed me and threw me to the ground. I knew it

was over, I waited for them to jump me, to tear me to pieces. I pissed myself, I nearly puked, I had no courage left, I couldn't get up. I rolled into a ball and I cried.

But nothing happened, nothing, not for a long time. I huddled there on the wet, cold grass and cried for Mom. Mom, that's what I held onto. Pictures of my Mom. That's what kept me sane, I think. That's what kept me there. In that horror, but alive, still thinking, thinking, thinking of my Mom.

A soft hand touched me and I leaped up; I think I really thought I'd see my Mom. I thought I'd see her there, ready to hold me, ready to take me home. But it wasn't, it was her — it was Brigitte.

"They're gone," she said, and her eyes were green again. "Michael couldn't do it; that's never happened before, but he couldn't do it." She seemed angry. "He took me, he took all the others, he took children and old people, a priest even — everything, but not you. He couldn't take you." She grabbed my shin hard. "He saw himself in you. I saw myself in Monika but he made me do it. But no, he couldn't watch himself be destroyed again, lose all, all . . ." She said nothing more, just stared at me as if looking at an interesting insect. For a moment I thought she'd kill me, or whatever they do, but no — her hand lightened and she touched me softly again. And she cried.

"You have to leave Munich, leave Germany, Europe," she said. "We all have your scent. You're all over us, our clothes, our skin. We can let you go because last night we killed, but in a few weeks some, or all, or us — we couldn't help ourselves, not even Michael. We'd have to. You must leave." I don't know why, but I felt, I don't know . . . strong somehow. I reached to touch her, but it was more than a caress. It was urgent, insistent. So close to losing it all, but now I had to somehow, somehow prove I was alive.

It was not gentle, it was hard, it was fast, maybe even brutal. It made no sense, but I needed it so badly. She gave back just as hard, just as desperate, and she called my name over and over and over. She was beautiful, she was all that a woman had ever been, could ever be. She was . . .

She was dead.

Afterwards, as I dressed she just watched me. She said thank you. She mentioned love and laughed. She was kind and considerate, she was everything you could ever want. She did, I'm sure she did, say she loved me. That she wanted to go with me. That she wanted to be mine forever. I'm sure she did.

But in the end she took out a mirror and handed it to me.

"Most of the legends are confused," she said, "most only part of the truth. We're hard to kill, but we die. Eventually, our bodies just decompose and it's over for us. We don't have to kill too often, and one person is enough for many of us. Without

Michael we'd be like the rest. Insane, I suppose, damned inside and out. We'd be evil, truly evil and learn to enjoy what we do. Helmut will be like that now. Michael can't control him anymore. Oh yes, we're monsters, real monsters. And you must leave, leave and never come back." She stood up and came to me. One long, gentle kiss. There by the river in the moonlight, in that place where I had learned I had a soul and so much more. She stepped back and sighed.

"For memory. When I was alive I never would have gotten you. I was never pretty or clever. I was a cripple, locked in a wheelchair, but I was strong. I had memories. That's all any of us have." She pointed at the mirror. It's not true that you can't see us in the mirror. You can. But you see us as we truly are." She reached out and turned the mirror so I could see her reflection, see her true self.

Another time I would have screamed, or maybe even passed out. But what is horror to me now? I don't know. But I looked almost dispassionately at what the mirror showed me. The skull sticking through the ripped flesh and grotesque patches of hair. The thin limbs and dried and withered breast and vagina. And the sunken eyes, gleaming like an animal's caught in the lights of a passing car.

I threw the mirror far down by the river bank, but said nothing. I can still hear that sound, the mirror smashing on the white rocks on the banks of the cold Isar. Crash! Crash! I hear it all the time now.

I turned to her beauty once more. But now I could see the corpse behind the illusion and I knew it would always be so.

"Why?" I asked. But she just laughed, walking away naked in the moonlight. She just laughed. After all, she had no soul . . .

I'm back in the States now. And I won't go to Europe for anything. The Old World can keep its secrets and its curses and its damned. I want nothing from the girm past. I go to church a lot, I'm thinking of becoming a Jesuit or something, but I know that's just out of fear, that I hope somehow I'd be safe in the echoing vastness of a church. But I know that's a lie, too.

The worst part, of course, is that I'm not safe here. None of us are. Not anywhere. I don't walk at night, I am not brave anymore. I stay away from all strangers. I stay away from everyone. I dream sometimes, but I won't tell you about what. But I still remember Michael's cold, blue eyes and hear what he said.

"We know some people in the States."



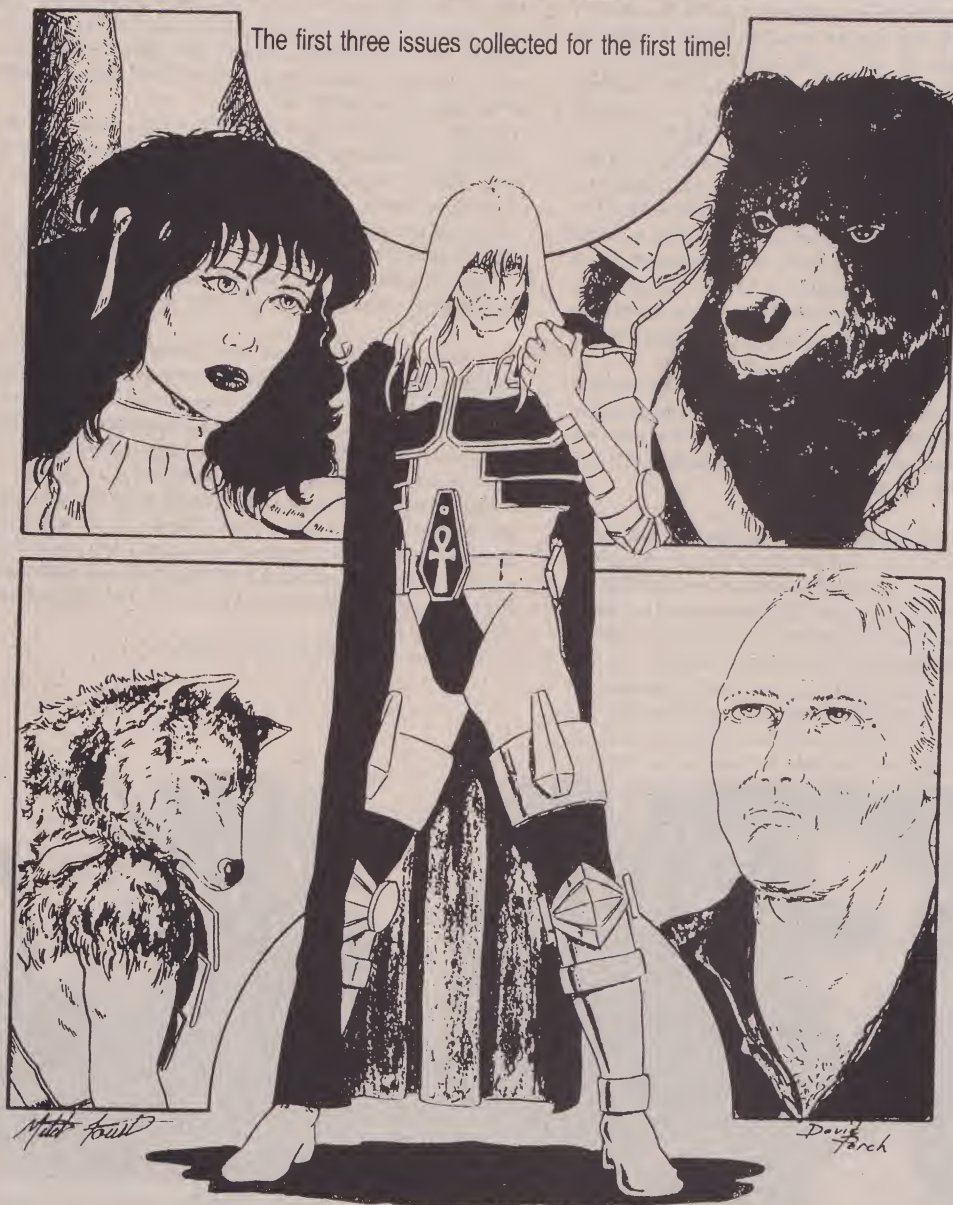
CALIBER

PRESENTS

THE LAST GENERATION

BONUS

The first three issues collected for the first time!



Graphic Novel Compilation of the first three issues of this acclaimed science fiction work by BLACK TIE STUDIOS.

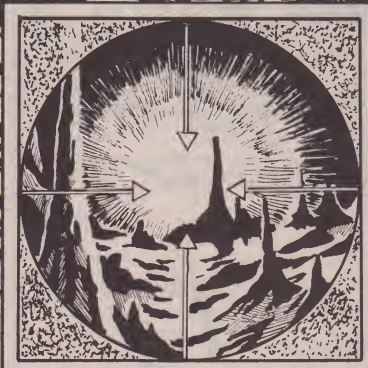
(The following is an excerpt from the soon to be released Compilation Book).

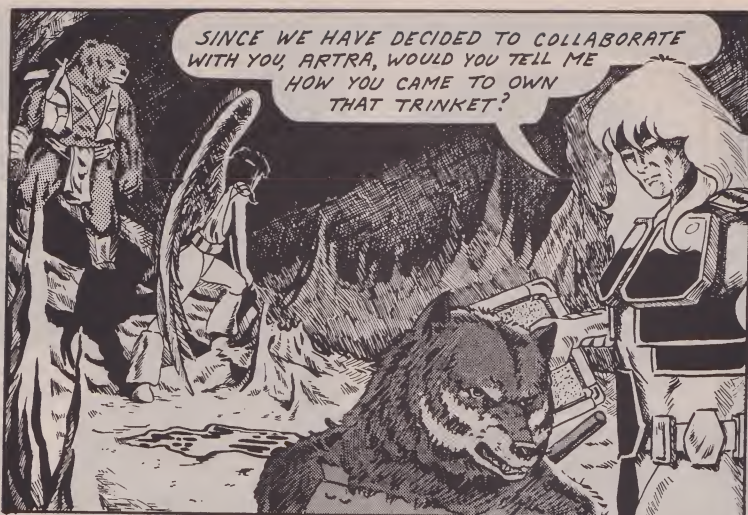
THE TERGIVERSATION SYNDROME



A MUSTY STENCH AND DAMP STICKINESS ASSAILS THEIR FORMS AS THEY ENTER INTO WHAT WOULD SEEM TO BE THE ENTRANCE OF SOME STYGAIN REALM, DEVOID OF LIFE, WITH SUDDEN DEATH LURKING AROUND EVERY CORNER. THE GIANT SPELEOTHEMS THAT RISE FROM THE CAVE FLOOR, ALONG WITH THE THICK BLACKNESS, ALMOST SEEMS TO SMOTHER WHAT LITTLE ILLUMINATION THEIR POWER LAMP PROVIDES.

THEIR UNDERGROUND SOJOURN CONTINUED FOR SEVERAL DAYS, WHEN...





SINCE WE HAVE DECIDED TO COLLABORATE WITH YOU, ARTRA, WOULD YOU TELL ME HOW YOU CAME TO OWN THAT TRINKET?

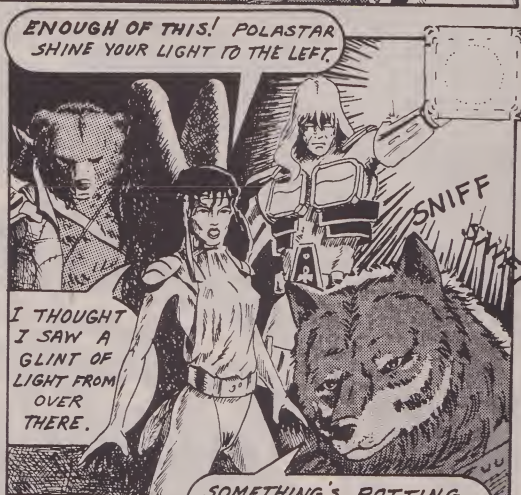


WHAT DO YOU MEAN TRINKET? THIS MEDALLION HAS BEEN REVERED BY MY PACK SINCE A TIME BEFORE TIME!

EASY NOW! I DID NOT MEAN ANY OFFENSE BY THAT REMARK.



YOU'VE BEEN STARING AT IT SINCE LAST NIGHT AND I DON'T LIKE IT ONE BIT. SO YOU BETTER BACK OFF.



ENOUGH OF THIS! POLASTAR SHINE YOUR LIGHT TO THE LEFT.

I THOUGHT I SAW A GLINT OF LIGHT FROM OVER THERE.

SOMETHING'S ROTTING OVER THERE.



THAT LOOKS LIKE ONE OF THOSE SMALL CREATURES WE FOUGHT THE OTHER DAY DOESN'T ARTRA?

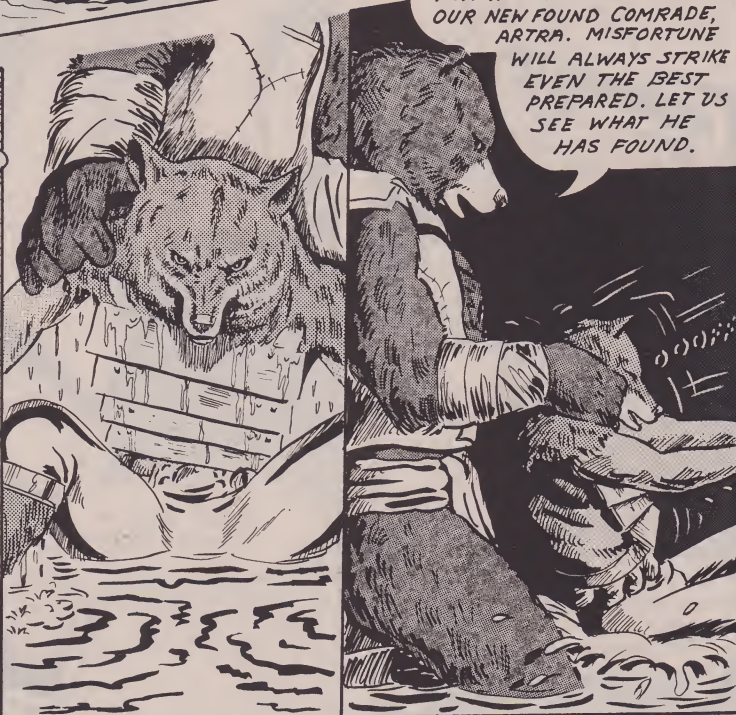
NO, IT'S TOO BIG.

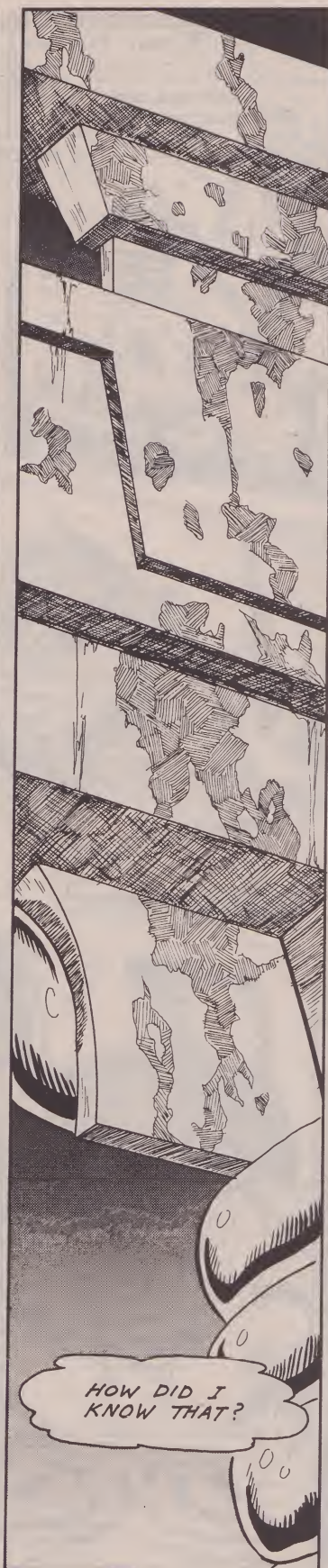


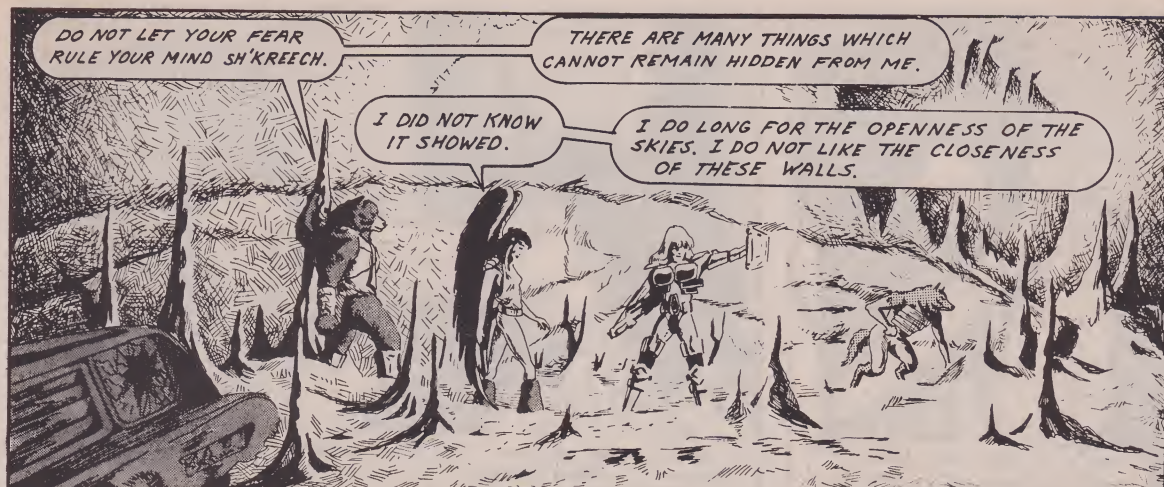
ARTRA, WHAT MANNER OF CREATURE DO YOU THINK CAUSED THIS CARNAGE?

WHAT DO YOU MEAN, CREATURE?

IT'S A BIG ONE, LOOK AT THE BROKEN ROCKS.







DO NOT LET YOUR FEAR
RULE YOUR MIND SH'KREECH.

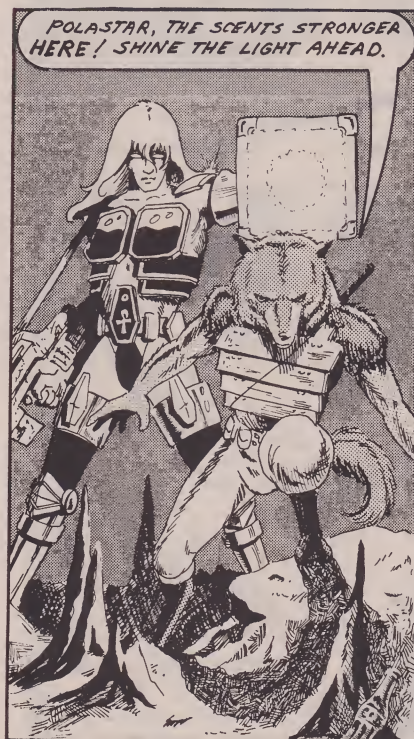
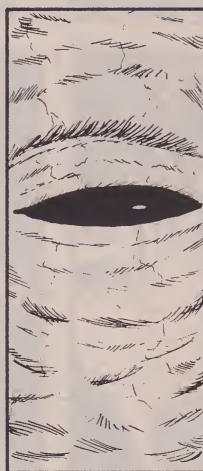
THERE ARE MANY THINGS WHICH
CANNOT REMAIN HIDDEN FROM ME.

I DID NOT KNOW
IT SHOWED.

I DO LONG FOR THE OPENNESS OF THE
SKIES. I DO NOT LIKE THE CLOSENESS
OF THESE WALLS.



THAT IS NOT WHAT I WAS
REFERRING TO. I PERCEIVE
THAT YOU ARE TROUBLED
CONCERNING SOMETHING ELSE.



POLASTAR, THE SCENTS STRONGER
HERE! SHINE THE LIGHT AHEAD.



YOU SEEM AWARE
OF SOME CHANGES IN
EREMOS THAT TROUBLE
YOU.

HE HASN'T BEEN THE
SAME LATELY. HIS MOODS
SEEM TO CHANGE FROM
MINUTE TO MINUTE.



HE APPEARS TO HAVE
BECOME OBSESSED WITH
FINDING THIS BEN-BEN
THING. BUT HE DOESN'T
KNOW WHY HE'S LOOKING
FOR IT OR EVEN HOW
LONG HE HAS BEEN
SEARCHING.



CAN YOU TELL ME MORE ABOUT THIS BEN-BEN?



I WISH I COULD, BUT EREMOS WILL NOT TELL ME MORE ABOUT IT. SOMETIMES, IT'S AS THOUGH HE DOESN'T EVEN KNOW WHAT IT IS.



WHAT WAS THAT?



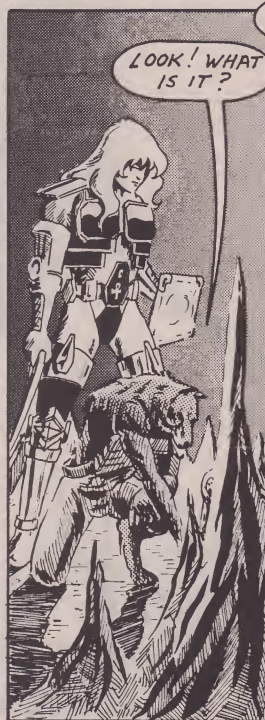
STAND YOUR GROUND, ALL OF YOU! DO NOT WANDER OFF. WE DO NOT KNOW WHAT WE ARE UP AGAINST.



SHUT UP! AND SHINE THAT LIGHT AHEAD....



I THINK I'VE FOUND SOMETHING.



IT SEEMS TO BE A MECHANOID OF SOME SORTS.





**Would you trust
these people
to save your
empire?**



DRAGON'S STAR

by Mary Ann Bramstrup
and Ian Carr

Coming From Caliber Press.

CALIBER PRESS

AMMUNITION

We're going to utilize this page to let you in on some information regarding some of the projects upcoming from Caliber Press.

CALIBER PRESENTS: A true anthology title, with stories ranging from the bizarre to the horrific. Short tales with humor, longer stories developed to punch hard, science fiction, fantasy, short fiction, it's all here. New faces and old favorites in the business, they all get together to tell the stories that wouldn't "fit" in the mainstream.

There's superheroes and sadness, animals and angst, always running the gamut to entertain you. See T.V. heroes come to life, and galactic aliens come to an untimely end. Each issue also contains FREE, a special story or preview. This bonus feature will include a preview of an upcoming project, or a glimpse of a different title already on the stands. You pay for 32 pages, and get 48!

THE CROW: Is it a story of an undying love, or unending vengeance? It's moody and poetic, a tale of retribution brought to you by Jim O'Barr.

Members of a gang are being hunted down, and brutally murdered. The hunter keeps talking about an innocent couple that was killed. How does the Crow know so much, and what does it take to stop him?

Follow this tortured soul, through his world of dreams and song, to the stark world of reality and violence. Can the Crow complete his mission, or will Death catch him before he has filled his quota of sacrifices?

Suggested for mature readers, with graphic violence.

PROGENY: Something in the city is murdering people. Brutally. But what happens to the bodies in the morgue, and why is it affecting Detective Trask so much? Can he stop the demons, or will the progeny overcome him, and the rest of the world?

J. Calafiore brings his detailed linear-art to this horror story graphic novel. The moodiness of the city, the internal conflict as Trask tries to decide who really is trustworthy, the hunt for the Master Demon, all this and much more is spelled out in this gripping 88 page story. Square-bound graphic novel format, for only \$4.95.

ON SALE NOW!

CALIBER ROUNDS: Get all the inside information on all of Caliber's titles with this monthly newsletter. The four page, two color, newsprint flyer is fact filled and fills you in all *all* the Caliber happenings. In addition to in-depth looks at projects, sneak peeks at future titles, interviews with Caliber talent, we'll be offering a two color poster spotlighting the various characters and titles.

SILVERFAWN: This popular character from the pages of the Realm will spin off into her own title — a one shot shipping in July. The story will cover her early days before she met up with our known band of heroes. As readers of the Realm will know, Silverfawn was sold into slavery as a youngling. How did she survive? Find out in this special issue. The first in a series of character spin-offs from the Realm. For those of you who *still* haven't read the Realm, don't worry, each issue will be entirely self-contained so even new readers can enjoy the sagas.

DEADWORLD: A place where death is only a beginning to the horror, where zombies walk the Earth trying to fill their insatiable hunger. Can our gang of "warmies" stay ahead of the hordes of undead, or will the King enjoy another royal feast?

As always, Deadworld is available with two different covers. One tame cover, by Jim O'Barr, and a special version "Not For Wussies." \$1.95 each.

THE REALM: Enter a special realm; a place of fantasy, with wizards, kings, dwarves and a touch of home. The realm of adventure, where heroes sometimes fail, and pay the ultimate price. The realm of action, where Evil can triumph. The Realm: normal people in abnormal situations.

It's a world of wonder, and danger. A place of riches, and prices to pay. A country of beauty, and unspeakable evil. Can a few teens from our world survive? Or will the death of one bring about the downfall of all? John Dennis takes us on a journey, to The Realm. \$1.95 monthly.

CHEERLEADERS FROM HELL: More than just large-breasted bimbos, it's got large-breasted bimbos with swords. Firmly packed with action, we'll stack this against anything else on the market.

You'll bust with laughter, you'll titter with excitement, you'll gasp at the melancholy, you'll get the idea before we get arrested for this ad. A special from our First Caliber line. Cheerleaders From Hell is by Neil Robertson, Mark Bloodworth, and Fred Gartner, and sells for only \$2.50.

Cheerleaders From Hell, fun for the immature of all ages.

BAKER STREET: It's a world unlike ours. No world WAR II. The Victorian Era still reigns in England and the culture clash of the punks is in full force.

It is a world where ratting is the new sport and police corruption runs rampant. A world with characters such as Harlequin, Lady Gothic, Noir, and Domino.

It is a world of intrigue, and punks, and mystery. A world where death may be around the very next corner. It is Baker Street. Written by Guy Davis and Gary Reed and illustrated by Davis.

Join in for the first act "Honour Among Punks," running in the first five issues.



GRINGO

He Came from the Desert
No Horse
No Name
No Memory
Then, He Remembered!

CALIBER PRESS

COMING IN OCTOBER

CALIBER ROUNDS

Matrix Line To Be Published by Caliber

Matrix (formerly Matrix Graphic Series), the Montreal based comic publisher, has come to an agreement with Caliber Press to have some of their titles to be published by Caliber.

While most of Matrix's line was considered for the publishing venture, the specific titles under the initial agreement are **New Triumph** featuring **NORTHGUARD** and **DRAGONSTAR**. Other titles are currently in the discussion stages and Caliber expects to announce other additions to the Matrix/Caliber agreement shortly. According to Caliber publisher Gary Reed, "We're interested in doing them and they're interested in having us do them, however, we are talking to the creators involved about various specifics." Reed notes that since Matrix and Caliber are strongly for creator ownership and participation there are a few concerns that have to be negotiated and worked out.

The initial release from Caliber of the Matrix line will be in September. The original **Northguard** series (actual title was **New Triumph** featuring **Northguard**) will be compiled into a trade paperback and carry the title



Northguard Book One: Manifest Destiny. It will contain all of the first five issues and sport a new cover by Gabriel Morrisette, who was also the artist for the series. Mark Shainblum, co-creator of **Northguard** (along with Morrisette), also wrote the critically acclaimed series. **Northguard** received much favorable response when it first appeared in 1984 as it dealt with a powered hero who was in a "real" world. It came out before the successes of **Dark Knight**, **Watchmen**, **The Question**, **The One**, and many others.

In addition to the trade paperback compiling the first five issues, a brand new three issue series will start up in September. **NORTHGUARD Book Two: The ManDes Conclusion** will run monthly. By the same creative staff of Shainblum and Morrisette, the limited series will deal further with the ramifications of Phillip Wise's decision in assuming the power of the Uni-band.

The second title that Caliber will be publishing from the Matrix line will be **DRAGONSTAR**. Written by science fiction author Mary Ann Bramstrup (Courier, Star Destroyer, Saga of a Star-Stallion, and Hybrid), the story takes place several thousand years in the future, generations after a massive war between humanity and an offshoot race called the Hybrids. The main characters will be involved in attempting to stop a plan of destabilizing the empire and bringing back the era of carnage. The artwork is by Ian Carr who has worked for Charlton, edited the 1980 Comics Annual, and just completed a **Secret Origins** project for DC Comics.

Although three issues of the series were published by Matrix, the third issue saw only limited distribution.

Caliber will reprint the first three issues and have Bramstrup and Carr complete the storyline to bring the story into a 160 page trade paperback. **DRAGONSTAR** will also see a September release. Carr will be doing an all-new cover.

"We're proud to be having **NORTHGUARD** and **DRAGONSTAR** join our ranks," said Reed. "They are both of top-notch quality and a welcome addition to anyone's lineup." Reed also mentioned the possibility of additional work from the various creators of Matrix appearing in other Caliber titles. "We'd certainly be open to that," he said.



SF Author, Mark C. Perry, Contributes To Caliber

Mark C. Perry, author of the **Morigu** science fiction series, will be working with Caliber Press on some upcoming project. Perry has written in the shared universe stories for **Thieves' World** and **Elfquest**.

The first project will be a short story entitled "Where's Lucifer" which is scheduled for **Caliber Presents #8**. It will appear in prose form.

A comic story written by Perry is also in production but the exact format hasn't been settled yet. The story "War of the Dragonclan" is currently in the design process and Caliber will release more information as it nears completion.

A major project between Perry and Caliber is also in the formative stages. This project would involve

other well-known science fiction writers and could prove to be a major event in the comic publishing field. According to publisher Gary Reed, Caliber will not release any information until more details are definite. "Both Mark and I are very excited about getting this project in gear," says Reed, "however, Mark is currently working on a movie script which is taking up a lot of his time. As soon as he's finished with that, we can really get going."

Reed also stated that Perry may have some other short stories published by Caliber. "We're real enthused about having Mark working with us and we think comic fans will enjoy his work as much as the science fiction fans have."

Boris Creator Joins Fairie Tails



James Denn Smith, creator of the highly popular title, **BORIS THE BEAR**, will be teaming up with Dan McKinnon and Bob Duchesneau on their fantasy series, **Fairie Tails**.

Smith, who is still producing **Boris** under his imprint Nicent Comics will pencil the series. McKinnon, who has worked for **Adventure**, **Now**, and **DC Comics**, described the four part series as "a time when Magic is unleashed and the world is once again, a world of sorcery." The series premieres in **Caliber Presents #6** and runs through #9 if successful, and all indications are that it will be, a graphic novel featuring the continuance of the story is already being designed.

The accompanying art samples show McKinnon's sketches for the series.

New #1's Sell Fast

The month of March saw the initial release of three (Crow, Baker Street, and **Caliber Presents**) of Caliber's titles and according to Bryan Andrews, Editor in Chief, the response has been very positive. "We've been swamped with mail order requests not only for additional copies, but many people couldn't find the title on the shelves at their local comic stores. We know some retailers are re-ordering, but I guess a lot of them haven't

yet," Caliber confirms that there are still copies available but the number is dwindling fast. "We decided to overprint," says Andrews, "because we knew they would sell." Andrews notes that each title was overprinted by as many as 5,000 copies. "We made the commitment with number one, but it's not something that we can afford to do with every issue, so we cut down — drastically — on the number of overprinted copies of number two on up."

In addition to receiving advance reorders on later issues, Andrews says that the orders on June solicitations have gone up. "The June books were the first ones that retailers ordered after seeing the



first issues." Across the board, Andrews notes, the orders went up 20-40%. Of all of our titles, the only title that didn't go up from distributors we've received orders from, is **DEADWORLD**. Andrews mentioned that **Deadworld** always fluctuated by about 10% in any given month anyways and the late shipping may have affected the orders.

"Caliber is extremely happy with the response that we have received from both retailers and fans," says publisher Gary Reed, "and we hope that we can continue that kind of response with all of our products and comics."

CALIBER ROUNDS

NORTHGUARD

SHAINBLUM • MORRISSETTE

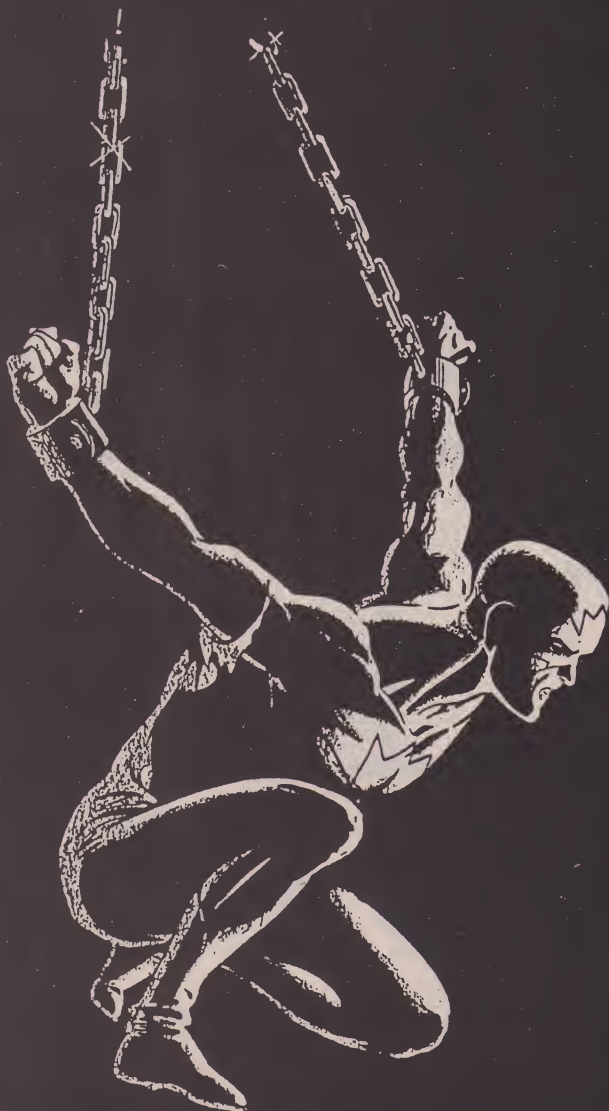
It was Phillip Wise's greatest dream . . . to become a superhero.

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NORTHGUARD

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ManDes Conclusion: All new stories in a three-issue limited series.



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